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LORD GREY'S TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

PEOPLE'S LIBRARY EDITION

IN THREE VOLUMES



VOLUME TWO

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VOLUME TWO

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CHAPTER XII

KING EDWARD AND FOREIGN POLICY

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THE visits of King Edward abroad have been the subject of much surmise and suspicion. They were not made the occasion of any manœuvres against any Power. They were friendly when he went to Germany; the malignant suggestion that, when he visited the Emperor of Austria, an attempt was made by him, or by anyone who went with him, to sow dissension between Austria and Germany has been disposed of by the publication of the confidential report of that visit made by Sir Charles Hardinge. To this I may add that I impressed upon Sir Fairfax Cartwright, when he went as Ambassador at Vienna, that he should do nothing to make trouble between Austria and Germany. We wanted the Entente and Germany's Triple Alliance to live side by side in amity. That was the best that was practicable. If we

intrigued to break up the Triple Alliance, our contention that the Entente was entirely defensive and was not directed against Germany would cease to be true. Disturbance and possible war, it was clear, would be the consequence. The Germans worked up the theory of an "encircling policy," and attributed it particularly to King Edward. I did not think that the German Government seriously believed this theory. It seemed incredible that they should not realize that, if Germany had alliances, other countries must have them too. It seemed to me that they surely must see that the Franco-Russian Alliance was the inevitable outcome and counterpart of the Triple Alliance; that German strategic railways must beget other strategic railways. The French encouragement of Russian railways towards the German frontier was a natural consequence of the railways Germany had already made towards the French and Belgian frontiers. The consequence cannot fairly be considered more malignant than the cause. After the Triple Alliance was formed Russia was isolated, France was isolated, Britain was not only isolated, but in constant danger of war with France or Russia. German statesmen cannot seriously have thought that this situation could last. France and Russia found some comfort in an Alliance, and at last Britain

found it in an Entente. It seemed to me that Germans must understand this sequence of events, and that the theory of the "encircling" policy was encouraged to keep German opinion up to high-water mark in expenditure on German armaments.

The visit of King Edward to Reval in the summer of 1908 was, and is still, made the subject of unjust suspicion and mischievous legend. As usual, King Edward was accompanied by Hardinge, and I stayed at home. The report made to me by Hardinge at the time of the visit is printed in an Appendix to this chapter. Here let it be observed, about all these reports by Hardinge of the visits of King Edward, that they are the real, full, authentic, confidential record of what took place.

In May 1910 we knew that King Edward was seriously ill. I had gone to my cottage for a week-end without expecting that anything was imminent; a private message from Hardinge told me that he had received very bad news from Buckingham Palace. I returned to London. My brother had just arrived from Africa. I told him what was impending, and we sat up together. The house I was living in is in Queen Anne's Gate, but on the farther and retired side and not facing Birdcage Walk. Late at night, all was quiet about us. Presently the silence of

the deserted street was broken ; something was being cried ; we leant out of the window and heard the newsvendors calling " Death of the King."

It is not till a thing has actually happened that we know the full import of it. Prepare for it as we may, try all we may, we cannot beforehand realize all that it will mean to us. But when the event comes, an enlargement of understanding is suddenly borne in upon us on a wave of emotion. I felt that something irreparable, like a land-slide, had happened. To explain what King Edward was it is necessary first to get rid of some misconceptions about him, which have obtained abroad rather than in his own country. A legend arose in his life-time, which perhaps was believed more widely afterwards, that British foreign policy was due to his initiative, instigation, and control. This was not so in my experience. He not only accepted the constitutional practice that policy must be that of his Ministers, but he preferred that it should be so. He read all the important papers, and now and then a despatch would come back with some short marginal comment approving of something contained in it ; but comment of any sort was rare, and I do not remember criticism or suggestion. In conversation he would show that he was aware of all that was being done and had

followed it, but his comments would be on some point immediately in hand. He did not care for long and sustained discussion about large aspects of policy, though he brought strong common sense and good judgment to bear on any concrete matter of the moment. It would be a mistake to infer from this that he was indifferent to the general trend of our foreign policy. It must be remembered that the course for this had been set before I went to the Foreign Office in 1905. I was continuing a policy with which he was already familiar and in sympathy. My impression is that he had gone through the same process as many of us had done, that of getting to feel uncomfortable at dependence on Germany, and to dislike repeated quarrels with France or Russia. He was therefore staunch in his desire for friendship with these two countries. Had his Ministers reversed this policy, he would, I imagine, have made it clear to them that he disliked what they were doing and thought it unwise. As it was, he never left a doubt that the policy we were pursuing had his cordial approval and good-will. But never for a moment did he suggest that this policy should be given a point against Germany; and when he paid a State visit to Berlin he enjoyed making his presence popular there as much as anywhere else.

He took an active interest in high diplomatic appointments, such as those of Ambassadors, but it was from the point of view of their personal qualities, not from that of policy. He wished us to be represented abroad with dignity and personal prestige.

What, then, were the qualities that made him so important to the country? They are not easy to describe, because they were the intangible qualities of a personality peculiar to himself. Let the more commonplace be considered first. He had in a very high degree the gift, proper and valuable in a Sovereign, for ceremonial. No one knew so well as he how ceremony should be arranged, ordered, and carried through in the manner most effective and impressive. By his own person, and by the part he took in it, he added dignity to it. In all this he performed to perfection the function that only the Sovereign can perform for the British Empire. This, however, is expected of the Sovereign, and, however well it is performed, unless there be something else, people are left satisfied but cold; they may even come to resent the pomp and the display. King Edward had a rare, if not a unique, power of combining bonhomie and dignity. The bonhomie was warm and spontaneous, but it never impaired the dignity. His bearing was a perfect example of tact, ease, and dignity,

and to this were added good sense and judgment that not only avoided mistakes, but perceived the thing that should be said to suit the occasion or please an individual. These gifts, valuable in any Sovereign, were particularly so in one who was the living centre of an Empire that included the self-governing Dominions and India.

There was, however, something more that gave a spirit and aspect to it all, and this was due to his individual personality. Warm human kindness was of the very substance of the man. The misfortune or unhappiness of anyone he knew caused him real discomfort ; and he would do anything in his power to relieve it. The success or good fortune of a friend gave him lively pleasure and satisfaction. He had a capacity for enjoying life, which is always attractive, but which is peculiarly so when it is combined with a positive and strong desire that everyone else should enjoy life too. These, it may be thought, are not very uncommon qualities, but King Edward had a peculiar power of making them felt. The crowd knew and recognized them. I imagine, for instance, that the humblest devotees of horse-racing in a Derby-day crowd knew that King Edward was there to enjoy the national festival in precisely the same spirit as themselves, that he wished them to enjoy it too ; that their

enjoyment was part of his own. There was, in fact, real sympathy and community of feeling between himself and his people. It was the same wherever he went. I was told it was perceptible even in the short time of his visit to Berlin, though there was no political Entente to predispose to popularity.

The effect was due, no doubt, to the genuineness of his own feeling ; but, when all has been said, something is required in the nature of genius to account for this remarkable power of projecting his personality over a crowd.

He became intensely and increasingly popular, and, when he died, the unprecedented, long-drawn-out procession, to pass the bier of state in Westminster Hall, was a manifestation of genuine and personal sorrow as well as of national mourning.

Popularity such as this centred in a constitutional Sovereign was an immense advantage to the State. The position is one that cannot be combined with responsibility for policy. Any association, past or present, of the Sovereign with political controversy would be fatal to it. The manner in which it was filled by King Edward, and his great popularity, made him a real asset of national stability ; and this, in a time of crisis or upheaval, would have been of inestimable value. His death was felt as a national loss,

especially by his Ministers, who were in the exposed position of responsibility for the conduct of the nation's affairs.

Every human institution must change, if it is to last. The strength and endurance of the British Monarchy has been due to its adaptability to new conditions. The United States and France have shown that Monarchy is not essential to modern States : the British Empire to-day demonstrates that even in the most democratic country there is a place for Monarchy, that, rightly evolved, it performs a function that no other institution could accomplish. The British Monarchy to-day adds to the stability, without in the least hampering the freedom, of Britain itself or of any part of the Empire. In previous centuries such an evolution must have seemed improbable : one can imagine a successful essay to prove it impossible by the argument that the Crown must either be a check upon democracy or be reduced to futility. The answer is, *solvitur ambulando*—the thing is impossible until it exists. It has come by the most convincing of all methods, not by plan, but by practical evolution.

Certain conditions are necessary. The succession must be hereditary : no other method of choice will give a Sovereign that complete aloofness from rivalry and controversy which is essential to his peculiar position. He must,

in his person, embody the traditions of the past as well as the practice of the present ; his previous life must have trained and prepared him for the position. He must realize that, while the ceremonial side of the Crown has to be maintained with dignity, and even with reasonable splendour, it is in fact a democratic institution. Each Ministry in turn must in equal degree, irrespective of class or party, have the confidence, support, and good-will of the Sovereign. However much his influence may be used with the Prime Minister or other members of the Cabinet in favour of his personal opinion about policy or appointments, there must be nothing done by the Sovereign to weaken or undermine the position of Ministers. In return, their attitude to him must be one of respect as well as frankness ; they must be careful to protect the Monarchy and observe its forms. The performance by the Sovereign of the duties and his observance of the limitations of the Monarchy must be repaid by perfect loyalty to him.

Everyone who was present when King George first received those who had been the last Ministers under King Edward, must have been touched by the deep regret with which King George found himself so early called upon to fill his father's place : they must have been impressed, too, by the modesty

and also by the earnest public spirit with which he addressed himself to the task before him. The promise of that first audience has been fulfilled: the King has been faithful to the traditions and practice of his father, and in the trying years that followed has shown a continuous example of public duty and patriotic feeling. The years that have passed do but confirm the impression that constitutional Monarchy is of the highest value in substance and in form to the unity of the Empire.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XII

REPORT OF SIR CHARLES HARDINGE TO SIR EDWARD GREY ON THE VISIT OF KING EDWARD TO THE TSAR AT REVAL IN JUNE 1908

After a rough passage across the North Sea, the King and Queen arrived at Kiel on Sunday, June 7. Their Majesties were there met by Prince and Princess Henry of Prussia, and, after a short stay, left again for Reval, escorted by a division of German destroyers for some distance from the harbour.

The smart appearance of the whole of the German North Sea Fleet lying at anchor in the port gave food for reflection upon the recent German naval programme of construction, while the intricate evolutions of the torpedo flotilla, which excited the admiration of all the naval officers on board the

royal yacht, served as a useful object-lesson of the efficiency of the German Navy.

I may mention that the officers of the two British cruisers H.M.S. *Minotaur* and *Achilles* were, while waiting at Kiel to escort the King in the Baltic, entertained at dinner by Prince Henry of Prussia, who made a speech to them expressing friendship towards England, disclaiming any aggressive intentions on the part of the German Navy, and asking them to make these views understood and spread throughout England. It is thought by those who know Prince Henry that he would not have spoken in this strain without direct instructions to do so.

I was able to ascertain, during our short stay at Kiel, that the work of enlarging the Canal has already been begun, and that a commission is this very week sitting at Kiel to arrange the details of the work.

The King and Queen arrived at Reval on the morning of the 9th instant, having had splendid weather in the Baltic, and there met the Emperor, the two Empresses, and members of the Imperial Family, with some of the Russian Ministers, on board the two Imperial yachts and the cruiser *Almaz*, the sole survivor of the large Russian fleet that took part in the battle of Tsushima.

During the two days spent at Reval the weather was fortunately brilliant, although only two days earlier such a gale had been blowing as would have rendered communication between the yachts almost impossible, and four inches of snow had fallen.

During the course of the visit the King had several interviews with M. Stolypine and M. Isvolsky, from

which, I understand, the best possible impressions were created on both sides.

I had several opportunities of discussing with M. Isvolsky the various questions of foreign policy in which our two countries are chiefly interested, and I cannot help thinking that this direct exchange of views between the two Foreign Offices will be beneficial and facilitate the solution of most of our pending questions.

My first enquiry of M. Isvolsky was as to the impression which had been created upon him and in Russia by Sir Edward Grey's recent speech¹ in the House of Commons. He replied that it was excellent, and that what had impressed people in Russia so much was the tone of moderation and firmness with which it was inspired. He was evidently pleased with it.

The question of Macedonian Reform entailed a considerable amount of discussion, and gave M. Isvolsky an opportunity of expounding the general policy of Russia towards England and Germany, which I will endeavour to describe as shortly as possible.

M. Isvolsky stated that the scheme of Macedonian Reforms was one which he had deeply at heart, and upon which Russian public opinion, as shown by the Press, felt strongly. He personally would have gladly accepted the whole of the scheme as first developed by Sir Edward Grey if he had seen the slightest prospect of obtaining its adoption by the rest of the Powers, and, lastly, by the Sultan. He knew for a fact, however, that this scheme

¹ Presumably the speech in the House of Commons explaining the Anglo-Russian Convention, Feb. 17, 1908.

would have met with the greatest opposition on the part of Germany and Austria, and even now he anticipated considerable difficulties if any further modifications of a drastic nature were to be introduced into the scheme as defined by his last note. He reminded me that Russia is always in a difficult position *vis-à-vis* of Germany, owing to the military supremacy of the latter Power on the frontier, that in Germany there is very great nervousness as to future political developments amongst the Powers, and that the age and indifferent health of the Emperor of Austria are a source of uneasiness as to the future. It was imperative, therefore, that Russia should act with the greatest prudence towards Germany, and give the latter Power no cause for complaint that the improvement of the relations of Russia with England had entailed a corresponding deterioration of the relations of Russia towards Germany. During the past two months the German Government had formally complained to him more than once of the hostility of the Russian Press towards Germany, and, although he greatly regretted the outspoken sentiments of the Russian Press, which he fully believed reflected their true feelings, he had been obliged to confess his impotence under the present system of liberty of the Press to control their utterances. The visit of the French President to London, of the King to Reval, and the impending visit of the President to Russia, had not tended to improve matters, and he foresaw that difficulties were to be expected from Germany and Austria, especially in the adoption of the scheme of Macedonian Reforms. He therefore expressed the hope that his last note,

which he had reason to believe the German Government might be induced to accept as it stands, would be adopted by Sir Edward Grey as the limit to which the rope could be strained without breaking, and that the King's visit to Reval might be consecrated by the announcement of the complete agreement of England and Russia upon the scheme of reforms to be adopted in Macedonia.

I told M. Isvolsky that when I left London the text of his last note had not been received by Sir Edward Grey, only a telegraphic summary having been sent by Mr. O'Beirne. Sir Edward Grey had therefore been unable to give me complete and definite instructions, although he had authorized me to make suggestions for a solution of some of the points still at issue. When at Kiel I had received the text of his note, and, although I realized that a complete agreement had almost been arrived at, it would be impossible to make such an announcement as he had suggested unless he was ready to accept the compromise which I had been authorized to suggest. As for the attitude of Germany towards England and Russia, and towards the recent improvement of relations between them, His Majesty's Government were inspired with no hostile feelings towards Germany, with whom they were anxious to maintain the most friendly relations, and they realized that every action should be avoided which would unnecessarily irritate or exasperate feeling in Germany. Such an attitude was probably even more necessary for Russia, but in the case of His Majesty's Government this did not mean that they would be ready to sacrifice their legitimate interests or those of humanity at large

to escape the ill-will of Germany, since this would be the course best calculated to provoke it. Although the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards Germany was, and had been, absolutely correct, it was impossible to ignore the fact that, owing to the unnecessarily large increase in the German naval programme, a deep distrust in England of Germany's future intentions had been created. This distrust would be still further accentuated with the progress of time, the realization of the German programme, and the increase of taxation in England entailed by the necessary naval counter-measures. In seven or eight years' time a critical situation might arise, in which Russia, if strong in Europe, might be the arbiter of peace, and have much more influence in securing the peace of the world than at any Hague Conference. For this reason it was absolutely necessary that England and Russia should maintain towards each other the same cordial and friendly relations as now exist between England and France, which in the case of England and Russia are, moreover, inspired by an identity of interests of which a solution of the Macedonian problem was not the least.

So, also, as regards the King's visit to Reval, which could not possibly be interpreted as a provocation to Germany, since it could not be admitted that the German Emperor should enjoy a monopoly of State visits to other Sovereigns, and Sir Edward Grey had been very explicit in his statement in the House of Commons that it was not proposed to negotiate any *new* treaty or convention at Reval. I explained that this statement had been expressly made with a view to preventing any trouble between

Germany and Russia owing to the King's visit to the Emperor of Russia. . . .

In raising the question of the Balkan railways he (M. Isvolsky) complained bitterly of Baron Aehrenthal's action in springing upon him the Sanjak Railway concession without any warning whatever—a proceeding which had seriously disturbed the *status quo* in the Balkans, and had shaken his confidence in him. It was clear that, in spite of Baron Aehrenthal having spent seventeen years in Russia, he had not grasped the real feeling in Russia towards the Slav population in the Balkans, since he had imagined that there could be only a short flare up in the Russian Press, and that Austro-Russian relations would then return once more to their former groove. In this he was entirely mistaken, since the relations between Austria and Russia in connexion with affairs in the Balkans could not be the same again. M. Isvolsky said that he felt considerable anxiety about the Balkan Railway questions; he was convinced that the Sanjak Railway would be pushed by Austria with the utmost energy, and he considered it absolutely necessary that the Danube-Adriatic Railway should be pushed forward *pari passu*. The Russian Government had only a very small financial interest in the proposed railway, but they realized that the completion of the Austrian schemes would mean a monopoly of railway construction in Macedonia, and, if this rumour should be confirmed, he would not hesitate to take strong measures to prevent what he would consider to be an infringement of the spirit of the Treaty of Berlin. Although he regretted that His Majesty's Government had been

unable so far to support the Serbian Railway scheme, he appreciated their reasons for not doing so ; but he hoped that, as soon as an agreement had been arrived at on the scheme of Macedonian reforms, His Majesty's Government would be able to lend their support to it.

I told M. Isvolsky that His Majesty's Government are not at all opposed in principle to the construction of railways in Macedonia, which must necessarily have a civilizing influence, but that they had deprecated the opportuneness of the action of Austria at a moment when the Powers were devoting their whole attention to the question of reforms. I was, however, able to state that, as soon as the scheme of reforms had been put forward by the Powers at Constantinople, Sir Edward Grey would be ready to instruct His Majesty's Ambassador to impress upon the Porte the necessity for granting similar treatment to the Danube-Adriatic Railway as has already been granted to the Sanjak Railway. We were, I said, of the opinion that either no concession, or both concessions, should be granted.

M. Isvolsky entirely concurred, adding that the Russian Government would prefer that none should be granted.

The conversations which I had with M. Isvolsky, of which the above is a summary, lasted about three hours altogether, and although I have known M. Isvolsky personally for a great many years, they gave me an interesting insight into the official side of his character which I had not previously had an opportunity of seeing. He struck me as very able and adroit, but extremely timid. Although he tried hard to make me commit myself on the

Macedonian question beyond the limit of the authority which was given to me, any suggestion which I made to him was at once set aside as requiring careful study. He was, however, very friendly throughout.

I had several opportunities of short conversations with the Emperor, who looked extraordinarily well, and in the best possible spirits. On the first occasion that His Majesty spoke to me he warmly praised Sir Edward Grey's speech in the House of Commons, which, he said, showed a remarkably true appreciation of the real political situation in Russia, and which had made the best possible impression. He asked me to convey to Sir Edward Grey his warmest thanks, and to say that he endorsed and accepted every word that his speech contained. He was extremely glad that the debate had taken place, since it had shown to the world that the two great political parties in England shared the same friendly feeling towards Russia, and, the dissentients having had free scope to say all that they wanted against him and his Government, the air had been cleared as after a thunderstorm.

He hoped very much to have the opportunity, before long, of making the personal acquaintance of Sir Edward Grey, who had so largely contributed to the realization of his dearest hopes in achieving a real improvement in the relations between England and Russia.

The Emperor repeatedly expressed his great satisfaction at the visit of the King and Queen, which, he said, sealed and confirmed the intention and spirit of the Anglo-Russian Agreement, and he

expressed his profound conviction that the friendly sentiments which now prevail between the two Governments could only mature and grow stronger with the progress of time to the mutual advantage of both countries. There might be occasional divergence of views in small matters, but the identity of the national interests of England and Russia in Europe and Asia would far outweigh any possible results from such trivial differences of opinion. A glance at the Russian Press of all shades and opinions showed conclusively how extremely popular throughout Russia the King's visit had become, and how it was welcomed as the visible sign of a new era in Anglo-Russian relations. On my expressing my surprise that such papers as the *Novoe Vremja*, which I had always regarded, when in Russia, as the bitterest foe of England, had now become the ardent supporters of an Anglo-Russian understanding, His Majesty admitted that he also was astonished at the rapidity with which the feeling had spread, and that he had never been so surprised as when he had read recently in a Chauvinistic "rag" called the *Sviet* a warm article in praise of England, and urging closer relations between the two countries. Since the liberty of the Press had been established in Russia, the Press had really become the reflex of public opinion, and it was astonishing to see the complete unanimity that prevails as to the necessity of warm and friendly relations with England. The idea had taken firm root amongst the people, and it only required now to be carefully fostered to bear fruit in the future. The Emperor admitted that, from the point of view of the relations of Russia to Germany, the liberty of expression now enjoyed

by the Press had caused him and his Government considerable embarrassment, since every incident that occurred in any distant province of the Empire, such as an earthquake or thunderstorm, was at once put down to Germany's account, and serious complaints had recently been made to him and the Government of the unfriendly tone of the Russian Press. He was, however, quite unable to remedy this state of affairs, except by an occasional official *communiqué* to the Press, and this had generally but slight effect. He wished very much that the Press would turn their attention to internal rather than to foreign affairs ; but this was too much to expect.

The Emperor alluded to the recent Baltic and North Sea Agreements, and said that he could not see at all the reason for them, nor the advantage. As far as he could judge, the situation remains practically the same as heretofore, the only result being much waste of time and energy, and considerable anxiety during the negotiations amongst smaller Powers as to the intentions of the Great Powers. They seemed, however, to have given some satisfaction to the German Emperor, and he did not therefore grudge it to him.

I seized the opportunity to say to the Emperor that I presumed that it would always remain a cardinal principle of Russian policy to keep the Straits between the Baltic and North Sea open, to which His Majesty warmly assented as a matter of vital interest to Russia. I said that the free entry into the Baltic was also a matter of great importance to England, and that, if ever the question of closing the Straits were raised in the future, Russia could

count on our co-operation with her to keep the Straits open. The Emperor remarked that this is one more instance of the identity of our interests.

July 12, 1908.

The remainder of this record deals with the details of the proposed Macedonian Reforms, sundry questions arising out of the Anglo-Russian Agreement in regard to Persia, and the measures to be taken in Crete on the withdrawal of the international force. The above are the only passages touching the relations of the Great Powers.

CHAPTER XIII

THE THIRD CRISIS (AGADIR)

Death of George Grey—Trouble in Morocco—The French March to Fez—The German Retort—The *Panther* at Agadir—The British Attitude—The Silence of Berlin—Lloyd George's Speech—German Protests—German and French Bargaining—British Efforts for Peace—Some Moments of Relief—A Theory of German Action—German Policy reviewed—Some German Ambassadors.

EARLY in 1911 George Grey, the brother next to me in age, was killed by a lion in East Africa. His work and his pleasure had been as a pioneer and explorer in new and in unmapped countries. Our work had been on different lines and in separate continents, but Fallodon had remained his home when in England. He had spent several months with me there or in my house in London in 1910, and we had planned to make permanent home together, when he should have given up travel and when I should be out of office. He had encountered exceptional difficulties in early life, and had surmounted them by great qualities. His thought on all practical sides of human work was clear and strong, and he had the power of decision and resolute action. He was a most excellent judge of men. To this was added an innate contempt

for anything that was not straight, and courage, both physical and moral, that was impregnable. In times of danger, and in wild places, he was a leader of men. In these last years I had known also his unspoken tenderness and sympathy, a quality that is so particularly attractive, when combined with strength of character and courage.

His sudden death was a great shock and an irreparable blow to his family and near friends.

In the spring of this year there was great internal disturbance in Morocco; Fez itself was in danger, and it was evident that the hand of France might be forced and that it might even be necessary for her to send troops to Fez to relieve the situation and prevent catastrophe, in which her own or other European subjects might be involved. Spain was the other Power with a special position in Morocco: she was very sensitive about her own prestige and very apprehensive lest, as the weaker Power compared with France, her prestige should suffer. If France took action, Spain was sure to do something in order to assert her influence. The whole Moroccan question would then be reopened. As long as it was possible, I deprecated any action by either Power, but things got worse in Morocco and eventually France sent a force to Fez and Spain landed troops in her

zone. Then suddenly the Germans sent a ship, the *Panther*, to Agadir. Agadir was a port not open to commerce; it was said to be suitable for a naval base. The German action at once created a crisis, and for weeks the issue of peace or war hung in the balance. We were bound by the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904 to give France diplomatic support. This engagement we fulfilled in letter and spirit, while doing all we could to steer for peace, not war.

The German contention was that French action in going to Fez had altered the *status quo*, as settled by the Act of Algeciras, and that if that *status quo* was not restored Germany must have compensation. To this we could not demur, and France accepted negotiations on this basis. In what followed I took the line with Metternich that, if trouble came, British public opinion would side with France and that German demands on France for compensation should not be such as it was impossible for any French Government to concede. On the other hand, I urged on France the expediency of withdrawing from Fez as soon as possible, and I deprecated the sending of British and French ships to lie alongside the German ship at Agadir, or even to occupy other Moroccan ports as a counter-stroke. Such action by us or by France, taken while there was hope of peace, would

weigh the balance on the side of war. As regards compensation I told the French in reply to their enquiries that we would raise no objection to anything they decided to give Germany in the French Congo, and that, even in Morocco, British interests did not, in our opinion, require us to object to concessions to Germany, short of anything that might be a naval base on the flank of our trade route. Concession to Germany in Morocco would not have been an agreeable solution, but it was for the French, not for us, to exclude it. It was, of course, made clear to the French that we should not suggest or hint at anything that they disapproved of, and that we should give them diplomatic support in resisting German demands that they felt to be excessive. This time there were no scares, such as there had been in 1906, that we were going to leave France in the lurch diplomatically. My relations with Cambon were such that I could discuss every possible method of conciliation with him, without his becoming apprehensive that we meant to throw the French over.

The despatch of the *Panther* to Agadir was a very brusque way of opening negotiations with the French: the Germans followed it up by a disregard of us that led to a dramatic incident. At the risk of somewhat confusing the order of the general narrative I will quote

the documents that explain and comment on the incident.

Here is the original announcement made to us of the despatch of the *Panther* :

Minute by Sir A. Nicolson

SIR EDWARD GREY,—The German Ambassador called this morning and said he had been instructed to make a verbal communication, which is recorded in the above *aide-mémoire*.¹ A similar communication was, Count Metternich said, being made to the French and Spanish Governments by the German Ambassadors at Paris and Madrid. I merely remarked that Agadir was not an open port, and that I was unaware that any German or foreign subjects resided there or in its neighbourhood.

Count Metternich continued by saying that he wished to make an explanatory statement: the advance of France to Fez, in regard to the necessity of which German reports differed from those of the

¹ The *aide-mémoire* is as follows: "Des maisons allemandes établies au sud du Maroc et notamment à Agadir et dans ses environs, se sont alarmées d'une certaine fermentation parmi les tribus de ces contrées que semblent avoir produite les derniers événements dans d'autres parties du pays. Ces maisons se sont adressées au Gouvernement Impérial pour lui demander protection pour leur vie et leurs biens. Sur leur demande le Gouvernement a décidé d'envoyer au port d'Agadir un bâtiment de guerre, pour prêter, en cas de besoin, aide et secours à ses sujets et protégés ainsi qu'aux considérables intérêts allemands engagés dans les dites contrées. Dès que l'état de choses au Maroc sera rentré dans son calme antérieur, le bateau chargé de cette mission protectrice aura à quitter le port d'Agadir."

French, and also the establishment both by France and Spain of military posts in various parts of Morocco, had created a new situation, and one which rendered the provisions of the Act of Algeciras illusory. By that Act France and Spain were only authorized to organize police forces in certain open ports. The German Government had no desire to pass any criticisms on the above action of France and Spain, but they were bound to lend an ear to the requests of German subjects and protected subjects in districts in the south where no organized police forces existed. It was the duty of the German Government to afford the necessary protection to the lives and properties of their subjects in the south, and to continue to afford such protection until a condition of normal peace and tranquillity had been re-established. The German Government were ready to endeavour to find with the French and Spanish Governments a definite solution of the Morocco question. They were well aware that there were difficulties in the way of reaching a solution, but owing to the friendly relations between Germany, France, and Spain, they did not consider that such difficulties were insurmountable. If the British Government were ready to assist towards this end their aid would be gladly welcomed.

I said that I would repeat to you as faithfully as possible what he had said to me. He could understand that the communication was one of great importance, and would have to be very carefully considered.

A. N.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 1, 1911.*

P.S.—I should add that Count Metternich said

that a return to the *status quo ante* was out of the question.

On July 4 I had the following conversation with the German Ambassador in London :

Sir Edward Grey to Count de Salis

FOREIGN OFFICE,

July 4, 1911.

SIR,—I informed Count Metternich to-day, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, that I must tell him that our attitude could not be a disinterested one with regard to Morocco. We must take into consideration our treaty obligations to France and our own interests in Morocco. We were of opinion that a new situation had been created by the despatch of a German ship to Agadir. Future developments might affect British interests more directly than they had hitherto been affected, and, therefore, we could not recognize any new arrangement which was come to without us.

Count Metternich asked me whether he might take down the exact words. I therefore dictated them to him, observing, however, that he must take this as a conversation and not as a written communication.

He remarked that the new situation had been created by French and Spanish action.

I said I understood the view of the German Government to be that the French and Spanish action had made it necessary for them to calm German public opinion by showing that Germany was not disinterested in the question of Morocco. They had taken the overt step of sending a ship to Agadir. We had not taken any overt step, though

our commercial interests in Morocco were greater than those of Germany. It was therefore the more incumbent upon us to make it clear that we, no more than Germany, could let things develop without taking an interest in them.

Count Metternich then said that the attitude of our Press towards the sending of a German ship to Agadir was not likely to foster that favourable atmosphere for discussion for which I had expressed a wish in conversation yesterday. The German Press, on the other hand, had been very calm.

I said that I had stated yesterday that the action of Germany in sending a ship to a closed port, where it was not known that commercial interests existed, was sure to excite the Press here and elsewhere. If we, instead of the German Government, had sent a ship to Agadir while the German Government did nothing, the German Press would have been equally excited.

In commenting upon the communication which I had made, Count Metternich said that he was sure the German Government would understand that it was natural for us to take an interest in the question.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

It will be observed that this was a communication made after consultation in the Cabinet: the first paragraph was what I had been authorized to say. Days passed, and Metternich was apparently left without any instructions from Berlin, and could tell me nothing from his Government when I saw

him. It is true that we had not addressed any direct question to the German Government, but it was unusual for any Government completely to ignore a communication such as I had made.

On the afternoon of July 21 I was suddenly told that Lloyd George (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) had come over to the Foreign Office and wanted to see me. He came into my room and asked me if the German Government had given any answer to the communication I had made on behalf of the Cabinet on July 4. I said that none had reached me, but, to make sure, I had enquiry made in the Office whether anything had come that day which had not yet reached me. There was nothing. Lloyd George then asked whether it was not unusual for our communication to be left without any notice, and I replied that it was. He told me that he had to make a speech in the City of London that evening, and thought he ought to say something about it; he then took a paper from his pocket and read out what he had put down as suitable. I thought what he proposed to say was quite justified, and would be salutary, and I cordially agreed. I considered there was nothing in the words that Germany could fairly resent. Lloyd George spoke as he had proposed that evening. What follows is the important part of it :

But I am also bound to say this—that I believe it is essential in the highest interests, not merely of this country, but of the world, that Britain should at all hazards maintain her place and her prestige amongst the Great Powers of the world. Her potent influence has many a time been in the past, and may yet be in the future, invaluable to the cause of human liberty. It has more than once in the past redeemed continental nations, who are sometimes too apt to forget that service, from overwhelming disaster, and even from national extinction. I would make great sacrifices to preserve peace. I conceive that nothing would justify a disturbance of international good-will except questions of the gravest national moment. But if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure. National honour is no party question. The security of our great international trade is no party question. The peace of the world is much more likely to be secured if all nations realize fairly what the conditions of peace must be. And it is because I have the conviction that nations are beginning to understand each other better, to appreciate each other's points of view more thoroughly, to be more ready to discuss calmly and dispassionately their differences, that I feel assured that nothing will happen between now and next

year which will render it difficult for the Chancellor of the Exchequer in this place to respond to the toast proposed by you, my Lord Mayor, of the continued prosperity of the public purse.

The speech was entirely Lloyd George's own idea. I did nothing to instigate it, but I welcomed it. The effect was much greater than any words of mine could have been. There was a section, and a considerable section, of opinion in this country that looked upon the Foreign Office in general, and myself in particular, as being unduly anti-German, just as in 1893, for instance, they looked upon Rosebery and the Foreign Office as being anti-French. Anything that I said was therefore liable to produce a certain reaction of antipathy in this section. The Germans knew this well enough, and no doubt prepared to make some discount of what I said. But Lloyd George was closely associated with what was supposed to be a pro-German element in the Liberal Government and in the House of Commons. Therefore, when he spoke out, the Germans knew that the whole of the Government and House of Commons had to be reckoned with. It was my opinion then, and it is so still, that the speech had much to do with preserving the peace in 1911. It created a great explosion of words in Germany, but it made Chauvinists there doubt whether it would be wise to fire the guns.

The speech certainly had the effect of making the German Government keep in touch with their Ambassador in London and send him instructions, as the following records of conversation show :

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen

FOREIGN OFFICE,

July 24, 1911.

SIR,—Count Metternich asked to see me to-day, and when he came informed me that he had fully reported to his Government what I had said to him on Friday, the 21st. He was now instructed to make a communication to me. It was as follows :

From the beginning the German Government had sent a ship to Agadir in order to protect German interests, and for no other reason. The special cause was the attack of natives on a German farm.

At this point I observed that I had not, I thought, heard of this attack before. I had understood that the despatch of the ship had been due to apprehension as to what might happen, not to what had actually happened.

Count Metternich remarked that he had not been told of it before.

He then proceeded to say that, so far, nothing had happened to give reason for thinking that the German intentions were changed. Not a man had been landed ; and he could inform me, though this was very confidential, that the German commander had strict orders to land men only in case of extreme necessity—when the lives of Germans were menaced.

I observed that I thought there were no Germans

in this region, and that I supposed, therefore, the term "German" must mean German-protected persons.

Count Metternich said that he had no information on this point.

He went on to say that his Government regretted the credence which was given to insinuations as to the intentions of Germany that came from hostile quarters. Germany never had thought of creating a naval port on the Moroccan coast, and never would think of it. Such ideas were hallucinations. She had no intentions on Moroccan territory, but demanded that France should keep strictly to the Act of Algeiras, or else come to explanations with Germany. The German Government thought that the latter course would be more in the interests of France, and they had proposed, quite generally, that Germany should be given compensation in colonial matters, in order that she might give up her right to object to French action in Morocco. Negotiations had been begun with France, and both parties had promised to keep the strictest secrecy. On the German side this had seriously been done; not even the Allies of Germany were informed of what had passed. France, on the contrary, to Germany's regret, had given partial information to the Press, and also to her friends, the information being incorrect and incomplete, and calculated to mislead as to the intentions of Germany.

Herr von Kiderlen had declared to M. Jules Cambon that he could not go on with negotiations and make positive and detailed proposals (a thing which he had not done hitherto) until secrecy was guaranteed. In order to avoid misrepresentation,

he had proposed that information should be given, when mutually agreed upon, to mutual friends and to the Press. M. Jules Cambon's answer to this was expected yesterday.

If the German demands were rather high, Germany was ready to make concessions in Morocco as well as in colonial matters. But the Chauvinistic tone of the French, and part of the British Press, menacing Germany with the interference of the friends of France, did not tend towards a settlement. Should the present negotiations be wrecked, even then Germany would have no designs upon Moroccan territory; but she would have to demand from France, with determination and emphasis, that the Algeciras Act should be fully carried out, in spirit as well as in letter. Germany could not, as one of the Great Powers, let the French presume to encroach upon her rights, contrary to written treaties. Germany still hoped that things would not come to that point, and that a friendly exchange of opinions *à deux* would avoid this. If, however, France should not wish to come to an understanding on the basis proposed, Germany would have to demand a return to the *status quo ante* in Morocco, and in doing so would count on the support of the other Powers who were parties to the Algeciras Act, and especially of England.

Count Metternich told me confidentially that his Government had made no demand as to the right of pre-emption in the Belgian Congo.

I said that I would communicate this statement to the Prime Minister. But, as I was likely to be asked in Parliament what was happening at Agadir, I should like to know whether I might say that the

German Government had informed me that not a man had been landed.

Count Metternich requested that I should make no public statement with regard to this conversation until he had had time to communicate with his Government.

I further observed that the question of what was the *status quo ante* was a matter of interpretation, in which I assumed that all the Powers who signed the Algeciras Act would have a say, and, if so, what Germany had said seemed to me to point to a conference in the last resort.

Count Metternich said that no doubt there were sometimes in treaties dark points which it was difficult to interpret, but there were other points which were clear. In this case it was very clear that France ought to withdraw from any occupation of Morocco extending beyond what was contemplated by the Algeciras Act, and the question was not one to be submitted to a vote, nor was it open to serious discussion. Germany, he repeated, hoped for our support.

I observed again that the question as to the *status quo ante* was a matter for interpretation, and it would have to be discussed if the time came to raise it.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

The following despatch shows the next stage :

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen

FOREIGN OFFICE,

July 25, 1911.

SIR,—The German Ambassador came to see me to-day, and, in reply to my question of Monday

as to whether I might make use in Parliament of the information which the German Government had given that no men had been landed at Agadir, he gave me the answer of the German Government.

The information was confidential, and they must request me to treat it as such. They could not consent to its being used in Parliament, after the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. That speech had been interpreted without contradiction as having a tone of provocation for Germany, and the German Government could not let the belief arise that, in consequence of the speech, they had made a declaration of intentions about Morocco.

I observed that I must say at once that the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech, which seemed to me to give no cause for complaint, had created surprise was in itself a justification of the speech, as it could not have created surprise unless there had been some tendency to think that we might be disregarded.

The German Ambassador said that he had a further communication to make about the speech, but meanwhile he went on to say that, if an understanding with France fell through owing to French resistance, Germany must demand that the Treaty of Algeciras be kept, and the *status quo ante* be restored, whether that were agreeable to France or not.

The German Government did not think that a Conference would be necessary. Germany, as one of the signatories of the Treaty of Algeciras, was entitled by herself to vindicate the rights of the treaty. If, in that endeavour, Germany found the support of third parties, it would be very wel-

come, and would facilitate her action. But if, after the many provocations from the side of France and her free-and-easy manner in Morocco, as if neither Germany nor a treaty existed, France should repel the hand which was proffered to her by Germany, German dignity as a Great Power would make it necessary to secure by all means, and, if necessary, also alone, full respect by France for German treaty rights.

This communication was read to me by Count Metternich, and he then proceeded to read to me a further communication.

The text of the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer had given rise, in part of the British Press, and in nearly the whole of the French Press, to attacks on Germany. The German Foreign Secretary could not say how far this was intended by the British Government. The effect of the speech had made a bad impression in Germany, as, owing to utterances made by me to Count Metternich, the effect of the speech could not have been unforeseen.

Negotiations were in progress with France to put an end to the difficulties which had arisen owing to the free-and-easy way in which she had thought it right to disregard the obligations of Algeciras. Germany had explicitly and repeatedly declared that she would like, without recriminations on the past, to come to a peaceful and amicable understanding directly with France. France had accepted this, and had agreed to carry on negotiations for the time being secretly. Germany had made propositions to France that seemed to the German Government quite loyal and acceptable.

Those propositions concerned territories in which English interests were neither directly nor indirectly engaged.

If, notwithstanding that, England thought that she ought to express some wishes, it might have been expected that these wishes would have been transmitted to Germany in the usual diplomatic channel. Instead of this, the British Government had, through one of their members, given public declarations which, to say the least, *could* have been interpreted as a warning to Germany's address, and which, as a matter of fact, had by the British and French Presses been interpreted as a warning bordering on menace.

Germany could not see by what reasons the British Government had been guided. The British Government could not have been in any doubt that, by that proceeding, the friendly understanding between Germany and France could not be furthered. Considering the tone which for some time had been adopted by part of the British Press, and by the whole of the French Press, the British Government could hardly doubt what effect the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer would have. If the British Government, assuming this as a hypothesis, should have had the intention to embroil the political situation and lead towards a violent explosion, they could not have chosen a better means than the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which took so very little into account, with regard to Germany, the dignity and place of a Great Power, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer claimed for England in that speech.

I said that I could only repeat what I had already

said about the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The speech had not claimed anything except that we were entitled to be considered as one of the great nations. It had claimed no pre-eminence, and it had not even indicated that there was a crisis. It had dealt in general terms with remote contingencies. The German Government had said that it was not consistent with their dignity, after the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to give explanations as to what was taking place at Agadir. I felt that the tone of their communication made it not consistent with our dignity to give explanations as to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

This, however, I could genuinely say. It was not intended, by anything that had been said, or would be said, to embroil Germany's negotiations with France. On the contrary we sincerely desired that they should succeed. The Foreign Office Vote was to be taken in the House of Commons the day after to-morrow, and I would then make this clear. But the tone of the German communication was very unfavourable also as regards France, and made it more than ever evident that a very difficult situation would arise if the German negotiations with France did not succeed.

Further conversation of a less formal and more discursive kind took place, in the course of which I observed that the German objection appeared to be to the Press comments on the speech rather than to the speech itself.

From this Count Metternich did not dissent.—
I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

That was the end of this incident, but the negotiations dragged on for many weeks yet to come, and there were very anxious periods. The Germans at first made such huge demands on the French Congo as it was obvious that no French Government would concede. The fact was that both Governments had got into a very difficult position: each was afraid of its own public opinion. The German Government dared not accept little. Their own Colonial Party had got their feelings excited and their mouth very wide open. If the mouth was not stopped—and it would need a big slice to fill it—there would be great shouting. The French Colonial party would revolt if their Government gave up much. Probably after a time the German Government was as anxious as the French to get out of the business by a settlement, but neither dared settle.

I was accused afterwards of having been more French than the French, and of having made things more difficult, because I observed to Metternich that some very large demand made by Germany on the French Congo was more than France could possibly concede. It was supposed that I was urging the French to resist.

The following two documents will illustrate the line taken by me with the French :

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie

FOREIGN OFFICE,

July 19, 1911.

Your telegram of July 18.

Since France considers that the demands made upon her by Germany are greater than she can consent to, it is evident that the French Government should now make counter-proposals which will embody what concessions in the French Congo she is prepared to grant. Any concession there considered reasonable by France could not be objected to by us.

I shall telegraph again as to the course developments may take in the event of a refusal by Germany to reduce her demands on French Congo.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie

FOREIGN OFFICE,

September 5, 1911.

SIR,—M. Cambon showed me to-day a telegraphic summary of the conversation of yesterday between the French Ambassador and Herr von Kiderlen in Berlin.

Herr von Kiderlen had, after some discussion, accepted in principle the project for what was virtually a French protectorate over Morocco. He had made difficulties about the limitation of economic equality to thirty years, about the French protectorate over Moorish subjects abroad, and about the judicial organization; and he had protested against the proposals about German protégés. He was, however, ready to agree to a secret understanding as to the establishment later on of a French

protectorate, really and technically. He had said that the Germans could not give anything in Togoland, and that he must refer all the proposals to the Chancellor.

M. Cambon asked me what I thought of this.

I said that I expected Herr von Kiderlen would reply that what was offered in the French Congo was not enough. Personally, it seemed to me that, geographically, climatically, and generally, Morocco was of so much greater importance to France than the French Congo that it would be a pity for France not to increase her offer of territory in the French Congo, if necessary, and if she could get a clean and definitive arrangement as to Morocco. Could she not, for instance, give the triangle for which Germany asked up to the river Alima?

M. Cambon said that this was impossible. He said that it must be remembered that, after the experience of the arrangement with Germany of 1909, the French Parliament would be apt to say that what was given up in the French Congo was solid, while nothing was being obtained from Germany except a bit of paper which might be worth nothing.

I remarked that any cessions of territory in the French Congo might be made dependent upon the agreement with Germany being accepted by all the other Powers who were parties to the Act of Algeciras. This would give France an assured position in Morocco.

I observed how important it was that, if there was trouble, it should be quite clear that it was Germany who forced it. I hoped, therefore, that the French would not break off the negotiations. M. Cambon

replied that the French Ambassador at Berlin was fully aware of the importance of this.—I am, etc.,
E. GREY.

All my effort was to get Germany to moderate her demands as much as she could and to get France to go as far as she could in increasing her offers. Whatever influence we had was used in this way to promote a peaceful settlement.

It was my opinion, and that of the Cabinet, that in the last resort we should propose a Conference to avert war. I spoke of the possibility of this to Metternich: he did not hold out much hope that it would find favour at Berlin. I sounded the French; they were not inclined to it, at any rate not yet. Cambon asked me what we should do if Germany refused a Conference. This I could not tell. I could only say that public opinion here would be stronger if a Conference were refused. No man and no Government could pledge this country in advance to go to war.

Eventually France and Germany came to terms. France got her free hand in Morocco, and Germany got concessions elsewhere. The Moroccan question was at last out of the way, and was not to threaten the peace of Europe again. The storm was over, but a groundswell continued sufficient to give the German Government a tossing in their debate in the

Reichstag and to excite the Crown Prince to a demonstration of feeling on that occasion. But the French and German Governments had made up their minds to peace. The French took care to make the Yellow Book that they published as much of an anodyne as possible. It was said at the time that the French Ambassador and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs at Berlin arranged together that this should be so.

Two other quotations will show the views I expressed to Ambassadors of less interested Powers :

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen

FOREIGN OFFICE,
July 13, 1911.

Italian Ambassador having asked my opinion about Morocco, I said that Germany had opened the question in the worst possible way. Having given it to be understood that her interests were only commercial, she had gone to a port which was closed commercially ; she has thus made it clear that commercial interests were only a pretext. Agadir happened also to be the port most suitable for a naval base. Germany had thus at the outset mobilized the whole of British public opinion, and made it certain that our interests would be engaged on the side of France.

It is now for Germany, if she wishes to make conversations easy, to do so by removing first impression created by her action.

We do not wish to impede a settlement between her and France, but we must wait to know what Germany's object is before we can decide whether British interests require us to intervene in discussions.

You should adapt your language to these views when the occasion demands it, or if it becomes necessary to repeat or supplement what I said to German Ambassador on July 4.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir G. Buchanan

FOREIGN OFFICE,

September 4, 1911.

SIR,—The Russian Ambassador asked me to-day what I thought of the prospects of the conversations between France and Germany.

I said that the outcome was very obscure. The Germans had changed their ground so often that it was very difficult to form an opinion. There would certainly not be war unless Germany intended to have it. If the conversations came to a deadlock, everything would depend upon what Germany did. If she took some action to rush matters, either by landing a force in Morocco or by sending to France a communication in the nature of an ultimatum about the Algeciras Act, such as Count Metternich had foreshadowed in a conversation with me some weeks ago, it would of course mean that she intended war. But otherwise some settlement would be patched up. I said that I understood the Russian Government were being kept informed of everything, and I asked whether he had any news from St. Petersburg.

He replied that he had none.

I told him that Sir Fairfax Cartwright had not

been cognizant of the article in the *Neue Freie Presse*,¹ and the attacks upon him had been worked up from German sources. There must have been some object in this. It might be that Germany intended to make a settlement with France, and to explain that this settlement was not satisfactory owing to the action of England. The German Government might intend to cover their retreat by giving this explanation to German public opinion. It might be one way of securing peace, though it would tend to an increase of naval expenditure.

I observed that the whole matter might have been settled if the Germans had gone to the French, when the latter reached Fez, and told them quietly that Germany must have a settlement. But when the Germans opened the proceedings by sending a warship to Agadir they mobilized public opinion here, in France, and in Germany. The Germans were now hampered by the public feeling which they had themselves created.

Count Benckendorff expressed himself very decidedly to the effect that the sending of a German warship to Agadir was very unfortunate, and indeed immoral.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

One more despatch may be worth quoting to show that even in Berlin there was sometimes a lighter side to the discussions, and that our Ambassador there was not without a sense of humour :

¹ An alleged interview with him published by that journal.

Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey

(Received August 28)

BERLIN,

August 25, 1911.

SIR,—I had to-day some conversation with Herr Zimmermann on the subject of Morocco, and particularly on the subject of the despatch of the *Panther* to Agadir. He complained bitterly about Mr. Lloyd George's speech, which, he said, had done untold harm both with regard to German public opinion and the negotiations. I said that for what had done most harm one must go back a little further than Mr. Lloyd George's speech, namely, to the despatch of the German warship to Agadir. He said that he had never understood why public opinion in England had been upset by that event. "When we informed Sir Edward Grey that we were going to send a ship to Agadir——" I here interrupted and said, "You mean that you had sent a ship to Agadir." He acquiesced in my interruption, and, continuing, said, "When we informed Sir Edward Grey that we had sent a ship to Agadir he took the news quite quietly, and we had no idea that there was going to be all this trouble about it." I said that it was in my recollection that you had spoken strongly to Count Metternich on the subject. He said, "Well, at all events, we had no idea that public opinion would feel so strongly about it, and Mr. Lloyd George's speech came upon us like a thunderbolt." He added that the whole trouble arose from the fact that it was not recognized in England that the despatch of a ship to Agadir, which had been the Emperor's idea, was really meant

to make it easier for the French Government to defend any compensation they might be ready to give, and which they had expressed readiness to give, before the French Parliament. I could not help saying that it seemed to me to be a somewhat dubious method of facilitating the negotiations, and that I could scarcely fancy a French Minister of Foreign Affairs standing up in the French Parliament and saying that he had had to yield to German demands for compensation because Germany, as a hint that she meant business, had sent a warship to a closed Moroccan port. Besides, I added, I thought that the *Panther* had been sent to protect the lives and property of the employees of certain Hamburg merchants. "Ah!" said Herr Zimmermann, "that was the primary reason, and the reason for the urgency which prevented us from informing the Powers of our intention. But it was thought, all the same, that it would have a good effect on the negotiations in the way I have just stated." I am bound to say that even Herr Zimmermann smiled when I mentioned the Hamburg merchants. I said that I was glad to know the real reason why the ship had been sent to Agadir, but I thought, if he would allow me to say so, that it might have been wiser if, before M. Cambon left Kissingen, he had been consulted as to whether the despatch of the *Panther* would have the salutary effect on the negotiations which the Imperial Government anticipated. To this Herr Zimmermann replied that he was not at Berlin at the time, or perhaps——. Here he broke off his sentence, which would seem to imply that he agreed with me.

Herr Zimmermann went over a lot of old ground,

and spoke at some length as to the disappointment Germany had felt at our attitude, the growing excitement in German public opinion, the irritation of the Emperor, and many other things which you have repeatedly heard from Count Metternich, and which I have reported as having been said by the Emperor. I need not, therefore, trouble you with the rest of his observations.

The reasons, however, which he gave me for the despatch of a ship to Agadir are, as far as I am aware, quite new, and therefore may be of some interest.—I have, etc.,

W. E. GOSCHEN.

The summer of 1911 was one of splendid heat; such a summer as comes seldom in England; it surpassed anything known in this generation. If my memory is correct, there were not less than thirteen days distributed through the summer when the temperature was 90 degrees or more in the shade—Greenwich reported 100 degrees on one day, but I have always doubted this figure: no other place got within 3 or 4 degrees of the 100. Still, it was very hot, and even when Parliament was not sitting the prolonged Agadir crisis prevented me from enjoying the glorious weather at Fallodon. One other colleague, not tied to London by official work, kept me company for love of the crisis. Winston Churchill was then at the Home Office, but he followed the anxieties of the

Foreign Office with intense interest and, I imagine, saw much of Sir Henry Wilson, then at the War Office—at any rate, he insisted on taking me once to see Wilson, and their talk was keen and apparently not the first that they had had. Let me not be supposed to imply that Churchill was working for war, or desired it: he followed all the diplomacy closely, but never either in Council or in conversation with me did he urge an aggressive line. It was only that his high-mettled spirit was exhilarated by the air of crisis and high events. His companionship was a great refreshment, and late in the afternoon he would call for me and take me to the Automobile Club, which was but thinly populated, like other clubs, at that season. There, after what had been to me a weary, perhaps an anxious, day he would cool his ardour and I revive my spirits in the swimming-bath.

What was the real motive that underlay the despatch of the *Panther* to Agadir?

Whoever has been inside British foreign policy is familiar with the emotion of indignation, amusement, or contempt with which he reads of the deep motives and the clever schemes that are invented for present-day British diplomatists and attributed to them by ingenious writers in foreign, and sometimes even in the British, Press. One who is conscious of this may well be cautious in attribu-

ting deep and sinister designs to the action of foreign Governments. I therefore give, with all reserve, the theory that seemed to me best to fit the facts.

One thing seems to be certain. The appeal of Hamburg merchants, the original reason given by the German Government for the despatch of the *Panther* to Agadir, was not the real reason ; there was something behind that, at any rate. We had assumed that the forced dismissal of Delcassé in 1905 and the dragging of France to a Conference at Algiers in 1906 were an attempt to break the newly formed Anglo-French Entente by demonstrating to France that friendship with Britain would bring France more trouble than help. On this assumption Agadir would be a second attempt to effect the same object. It would, in my opinion, be contrary to evidence and reason to suggest that the Bosnia-Herzegovina Crisis of 1908-9 was engineered by Germany to shake the relations between Britain, France, and Russia ; but the result of it had been to damage in Russia the prestige of the alliance with France, and to lower Russian opinion of the value of British friendship. This may have encouraged the notion that another crisis directed against France was not an entirely hopeless project. On this theory Germany must have contemplated the contingency of war with

France, if need be. Had the crisis led to war, this would have come at the very season that we know was favoured for the purpose by German military leaders in 1870, and that was selected for the menace to France in 1905, and that we believe was decided by the military authorities for war in 1914.

If this theory be correct, if the Agadir Crisis was intended to end either in the diplomatic humiliation of France or in war, why was it allowed to end without effecting either object? One answer would be that in 1911 the German Fleet was not so strong as in 1914, nor the German Army at the same height of equipment to which it was subsequently brought by her capital levy. Germany had, therefore, decided not to risk war with Britain, and when it became apparent that there was this risk she switched, difficult as it then was to do so, on to a policy of certain peace. Before the crisis she may have been encouraged to think the risk of war with Britain negligible, or even remote. My own conduct of Foreign Affairs had become very unpopular with part of the Liberal Press and was the subject of open criticism. The writers of these criticisms made the mistake, as is so often done, of attributing all that they disliked to the influence of one man, not realizing that all important telegrams to and from the Foreign Office were circulated every day to

the Cabinet, and that it is impossible for any Secretary for Foreign Affairs to continue in his post unless he has the general approval of the Cabinet. How much the impression made in Germany by these Liberal critics was increased by sources with which the agents of the German Embassy in London were bound to be in touch I never knew or enquired. The surmise is that Germany thought, for one reason or another, that we should be less firm in 1911 in a Morocco Crisis than we were in 1906. If so, the speech of Lloyd George must have upset the whole of their calculations.

We were told at the time, with what truth I do not know, that, when it seemed possible that war might come, the great financial interests in Germany strongly opposed it, urging that they had not been warned in time to make suitable arrangements. If this be true, the fact that the German Government had not warned their financiers can only be accounted for in one of two ways: either they had overlooked the necessity for warning them, or else this theory that the German Government had contemplated and deliberately provoked the contingency of war is not correct. Some day perhaps the Germans will tell us—if they really know, or have still the means of finding out the truth.

The end was almost a fiasco for Germany ;

out of this mountain of a German-made crisis had come a mouse of colonial territory in tropical Africa. France was left with her prestige intact and free of the Morocco thumb-screws. Happily there was sufficient criticism of what France had ceded to prevent the end being regarded in France as a triumph. Colonial Parties in France, as in Britain and elsewhere, are apt to estimate portions of tropical Africa by their extent in square miles and not by their real value. Lloyd George, of course, made no speech about having supported France in shining armour. But the consequences of such a foreign crisis do not end with it. They seem to end, but they go underground and reappear later on. The militarists in Germany were bitterly disappointed over Agadir, and when the next crisis came we found them with the reins in their hands at Berlin.

So also with the consequences of the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis; in 1914 Germany and Austria found a Russia that would not collapse to order a second time.

Since 1906 I had made no enquiry whether the British and French military authorities were remaining in close touch, though I had assumed that they were doing so. Agadir made it certain that their preparations would be kept up to date. This reflection suggested to me in later years a train of thought that

took shape in imagining the indictment that Bismarck, could he have been a spectator of it all, might have brought against his successors, particularly in their dealings with Britain.

"I left you," he might say, "predominant in Europe with a strong Triple Alliance.

"It may be that the Franco-Russian Alliance could not be prevented; the very strength of the Triple Alliance was almost bound to call that counter-Alliance into being. But when it was made there was no chance of England joining it; indeed, the Alliance seemed directed more against England than against Germany, so bad were the relations of England with both France and Russia. At length England, in her discomfort, publicly through Chamberlain offered us an Alliance. You rejected it, and added to English discomfort by starting a naval programme, which everybody considered a challenge to the British Fleet. At last England and France, tired of their quarrels, perceived that these were a danger to themselves and an advantage to Germany, and English statesmen, weary of the discomfort of their isolation and apprehensive for the future, found French statesmen ready to make up their quarrels in the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904. Thereupon you threatened France; she gave up Delcassé; you saved that point, but in doing so you

turned the Anglo-French Agreement into an Entente. Meanwhile, you made no attempt to check the hatred of England that was felt in Germany, not understanding that to indulge hatred is sure to spoil wise policy and sound statecraft. And those speeches of the Emperor, who thought, even while I lived, that he could do better, without than with me; those 'shining armour' and 'mailed fist' speeches, those rattlings of the sword, which, though he personally never desired to draw in great conflict, nevertheless made other nations look nervously to the state of their own weapons. You increased the naval competition and rejected, sometimes even resented, English overtures for a naval agreement. As if England could possibly give up the naval competition, the Navy being to her all that the Army was to Germany.

"Meanwhile, as if to make sure that English and French military as well as naval authorities kept their arrangements up to the mark, you got up the crisis of Agadir. What purpose did that business serve, except to bring England and France closer together?

"And finally, you let your military staffs prepare a war plan, of which the unprovoked invasion of Belgium was a cardinal point, and you think to this day that the invasion of Belgium had nothing to do with England's entry into war against you. I will tell you

what I would have done. After the Franco-Russian Alliance was made I should have foreseen that, in spite of an English Minister's boast about 'splendid isolation,' the discomfort of England's position must bring her to Germany, and when the offer came, as come it did to you, I would have made sure that it did not come to nothing. There would then have been no agreement with France, or, if there had been, it would have been conditioned by the Alliance or previous Agreement with Germany. I should have had my hand in it, and known all about it; and I should also have known all about the relations between England and Russia, just as you knew when Austria and Russia joined in the Mürzsteg programme about the Balkans. Then, when the Russian Fleet had been destroyed by the Japanese, I should have made the German Fleet strong enough to over-match the French, telling England my object and stopping naval expenditure there. England in this policy would have been no obstacle to German commercial expansion; even as it was, she practically came to agreement with you about the Bagdad Railway.

"Then, if I thought the time had come for war, I should have remembered how, in 1870, the British Government required me, as a condition of neutrality, to sign an agreement to respect Belgium, and what English states-

men said about it at the time. I should have made sure whether English feeling was still the same, and have told the General Staff that they must have a plan that did not involve Belgium, or else they must have no war. With England neutral, I should have been sure of Italy ; with France and Russia unable to maintain supplies of munitions, or even to purchase them from abroad, the war would not have been long and victory would have been certain. Then easy terms for France and Russia, as for Austria in 1866, and Germany would have been supreme on the Continent. England would, meanwhile, by the development of modern weapons and aircraft, have lost much of the safety she once had as an island : she would have had no friend but Germany, and Germany could have made that friendship what she pleased."

Germans can judge whether such a policy as is here suggested for Bismarck was possible for them. Had such a policy been pursued by Germany, I think it not only possible, but almost certain, that British Ministers and British opinion would have reacted to it as described. The result would have been German predominance and British dependence, but this would not have been foreseen in London till too late.

It was shortly after the Agadir Crisis that

a change was made in the German Embassy in London. Metternich left. He had been rigid in upholding the German view against ours. Over and over again he had covered the ground in the way of which some records of conversation printed in this book are examples. I used to compare these conversations to well-known movements on a parade-ground. But I always felt, with Metternich, that whatever I said would be faithfully reported by him; that no chance and unintentional slip of mine in our many conversations would be turned to unfair advantage; that nothing would be distorted or misrepresented. In the whole of our transactions I never found reason to complain of any unfairness. It was also my impression that, however stiff Metternich might be in upholding the views of his Government to us, however little disposed he seemed to concede anything, yet in his own reports to Berlin he put the British view in the most favourable light that he thought could fairly be placed upon it.

I regretted his departure, and the farewell dinner given to him at the Foreign Office was not a political gesture, but a genuine expression of personal regard.

Metternich was succeeded by Baron Marschall von Bieberstein. He had been Foreign Secretary at Berlin when I had become Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in London,

nearly twenty years before. The impression I had then got from reports to the Foreign Office was that of a very able Foreign Secretary, but not very friendly to us. He had now for many years been German Ambassador at Constantinople, where he had furthered the pro-Abdul Hamid policy of his Government with conspicuous ability and with great success in enhancing German political influence and commercial interests in the Turkish Empire. We respected his ability, but regarded this German policy at Constantinople as unscrupulous and detestable. We therefore felt his coming to London to be a somewhat formidable and not altogether auspicious event. We expected him, as an able diplomatist, to begin by making himself agreeable, but we were prepared to be on our guard.

When he arrived he told me that he did not wish to enter upon any discussions at present ; he had come to take up his post formally ; when this was done he would return to Germany and come back to take up the work permanently. I gathered that he desired to gain first impressions of us and of the situation in London, and then to consult his own Government as to the opening line he should take. He came to lunch with me quietly that we might make further personal acquaintance and began very pleasantly by telling

me he had noticed in some speech of mine a sentence with which he entirely agreed. The sentence he had selected was (I quote from memory) : " It is not hard to tell the truth ; the difficulty is to get it believed." This he endorsed with great approval, but what impressed me most was the emphasis with which he spoke of the need for upholding civil authority and law against forces that are disposed to disregard them. He did not specify militarism as one of these forces, but it may well be that it was in his mind. At any rate, the manner and substance of what he said set me wondering whether he was thinking of forces that had caused his own removal from the Foreign Office at Berlin. I never knew what had brought this about ; it was certainly not incompetence on his part.

He gave the impression of a man whose life had been given without relief to hard work. His strength was now ebbing, and it was touching as well as admirable to see the energy with which he addressed himself to his new and important work here. He evidently understood English well, but it appeared to be an effort for him to speak it. It was an effort that he would not spare himself ; to make it was to him part of the thorough performance of his work in London. After a short stay he left us, as had been intended, to prepare for his return to take up

the heavy and continuous work of his post ; but his strength was spent and he died.

The impression he made was of a man old and worn with toil, but so devoted to his country that he was determined to serve it thoroughly and strenuously to the end. This impression was so strong and remarkable that it has remained outstanding in my memory. This, I suppose, is why it has been given space here out of all proportion to the political importance of my dealings with him ; for we met only a very few times, and transacted no business with each other.

He was succeeded in London by Prince Lichnowsky, of whom more will be said later on. He came desiring to see the peace of Europe kept, and for that he worked earnestly and sincerely, till the events of 1914 overwhelmed him, and everyone else who had tried to prevent war.

The sentence quoted above as to the difficulty in getting the truth believed recalls a saying, attributed, whether rightly or not I do not know, to Bismarck. It is to the effect that the most certain way in diplomacy to deceive people is to tell them the truth ; for they never believe it. And this suggests the reflection that in Foreign Affairs generally more mischief and loss has been incurred owing to incredulity than credulity. Perhaps because the former is so much more common.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FOURTH CRISIS (THE BALKAN WAR)

Haldane's Visit to Berlin—Advantages and Drawbacks—An Unacceptable Formula—Continuance of Naval Rivalry—The Attack upon Turkey—Victory of the Balkan Allies—Bulgaria dissatisfied—Second Balkan War—Defeat of Bulgaria—Treaty of Bucharest—Its Consequences—Complications between the Powers—The Ambassadors' Conference—Questions at Issue—Albania, Scutari, and the Ægean Islands—Serbian Claims and Austrian Opposition—The Importance of Djakova—A Peaceful Settlement—Cambon, Benckendorff, and Lichnowsky—A Neglected Precedent.

DURING all this period, whenever we seemed to be in sight of improved relations with Germany, we were thrown back by the continued expansion of the German Fleet. It has since been made clear that Germany was aiming at a position on the sea which must have been a most serious danger to the British Empire; and so well aware were German statesmen of that fact that they habitually spoke of the period of their naval construction as "the danger-zone"¹ for Germany, thus implying that Great Britain might have been expected to anticipate the danger by attacking Germany, and destroying

¹ See von Tirpitz, *My Memories*, p. 195.

her fleet before it became too strong. Germany was undoubtedly within her rights in challenging our sea-power, but in so doing she compelled us to find safety both by increasing our naval construction and by a policy which would not leave us exposed to the hostility of other naval Powers. A desire for peace and friendship entered largely into our relations with France, but German action made them in this sense a practical necessity.

We were always ready for accommodation, but the results of our overtures had been so disappointing and the successive German Navy Bills¹ seemed to indicate so persistent an intention that scepticism on our side was justifiable. So, when I was informed, at the beginning of 1912, that the German Emperor would welcome the visit of a British Minister to discuss the question at Berlin, I was willing but not hopeful.

The intimation had come through an unofficial channel ; it had not come to me, but had reached members of the Cabinet who were likely to be most favourable to it. The information was very vague. I did not feel at all confident that the Emperor had taken any initiative in the matter. I never knew whether the suggestion had really emanated

¹ For a convenient summary of these Bills see Asquith's *Genesis of the War*, chapters x and xii.

from a British or a German source. It was, however, put before me by some of my colleagues as something on which the German Emperor had expressed a wish ; if so, it would be a wanton rebuff to refuse it. At the time I thought it was possibly one of those petty, unofficial manœuvres that could be avowed or disavowed at Berlin, as best might suit German convenience. If a British Minister did not go to Berlin, the inaction might be represented as an uncivil rebuff on our part of a friendly German invitation. If a Minister did go, the visit would be represented as a voluntary British overture, which Germany had not invited, but to which the Emperor had graciously responded. Thus Germany would get some advantage either way ; but it seemed preferable that she should have the credit of being gracious to us rather than that we should be accused of discourtesy to her.

One objection was that the visit might arouse suspicion and distrust at Paris. I did not consider that this ought to prevent the visit, for an Entente is not worth much unless the nations who are parties to it can trust each other, and by this time France ought to have felt that she could trust us. There was nothing in the Anglo-French Entente that made it inconsistent for us to be on friendly terms with Germany. We could not, of course, enter into any engage-

ment with Germany that would prevent us from giving France the diplomatic support promised in the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904; it would also be the height of dishonour to make an agreement with Germany that would tie our hands and oblige us to remain neutral in a war between France and Germany. We had not, indeed, pledged ourselves to support France in such a war. On the contrary, we had preserved our freedom not to participate in it; but we were bound to preserve the freedom of Britain to help France, if the country so desired. According to my recollection, for no record of the conversation has been found, I informed Cambon of the projected visit and assured him that we should do nothing with Germany that would tie our hands. As long as that condition was observed I considered that the French had no reason to be anxious, and ought indeed to be well content: for good relations between Britain and Germany ought to make things more, and not less, pleasant for France.

The question of French susceptibility was therefore not a valid reason against this British visit to Berlin. But I had no great hope that anything would come of it. There had been no preparation of the ground: there was nothing to indicate that a substantial agreement with Germany about navies was possible, and without that there could

be no agreement that would really be a *rapprochement*.

It was therefore desirable that the visit of a British Minister should be private and informal, so that, if nothing came of it, there should be no sensation and little disappointment to the public. Accordingly, we agreed that Haldane should go. He was in the habit of visiting Germany; he had friendly personal relations with the Emperor and other important personages; his visit could be made more natural and less artificial than that of any other Minister. If nothing came of it, it would not have the appearance of an unusual effort and great failure; if the time was opportune for *rapprochement*, Haldane better than anyone else would be able to discover and improve it.

I agreed without demur and with good-will to Haldane's visit. I always felt that the pro-German element here had a right to demand that our foreign policy should go to the utmost point that it could to be friendly to Germany. That point would be passed only when something was proposed that would tie us to Germany and break the Entente with France. Not only were people entitled to demand this of British foreign policy, but it was essential that those who set most store by the Entente with France should concede it. To do so was the only way to preserve

unity of support in the Cabinet and in the Liberal Party for the Anglo-French Entente.

Haldane has given his own account of the visit. The upshot was that the Germans were not really willing to give up the naval competition, and that they wanted a political formula that would in effect compromise our freedom of action. We could not fetter ourselves by a promise to be neutral in a European war. We had, indeed, no intention of supporting France, and still less Russia, in a war of aggression: we had a very real determination not to support any aggressor, and we were ready to say so. But there was no formula that could be trusted to define the real aggressor in advance. The revelation of Bismarck's methods in the notorious Ems despatch was a warning against the futility of such formulæ. We were bound to keep our hands free and the country uncompromised as to its liberty of judgment, decision, and action.

The section at home that was most distrustful of Germany, that was in fact anti-German, were unfavourable to the Haldane visit. Von Tirpitz and the naval authorities probably detested it. They were determined to pursue their naval policy, and the visit was bound either to interfere with this policy or to come to nothing. We discussed the result of the visit in the Cabinet on Haldane's return.

but we had to realize that political formulæ are not safe, and that a substantial naval agreement, such as would relax tension and give security, was not to be obtained.

On the question of the naval competition and our relations with Germany generally, the following three private letters to Sir E. Goschen, our Ambassador in Berlin, may be inserted here, though they belong to various dates. They show the interchanges of views that took place from time to time between 1910 and 1913 and the difficulties that attended them :

From Sir E. Grey to Sir E. Goschen

FOREIGN OFFICE,

May 5, 1910.

MY DEAR GOSCHEN,—I have not seen the Prime Minister for three weeks, but even if I had seen him I am sure he has been far too busy, during the last weeks of the part of the Session just closed, to be able to go into Bethmann-Hollweg's proposals. So what I send you now are my own personal reflections ; but you may use them as such at your discretion if you are pressed in further conversation with the Chancellor or Schoen.

I entirely understand the Chancellor's difficulty in giving us the southern end of the Bagdad Railway without getting in return something which Germany will look upon as a *quid pro quo*. I have the same difficulty here in giving what he asks : for British public opinion is not less exacting than German.

Crawford, of the Turkish Customs Service, tells me that 65 per cent. of the trade with Mesopotamia is British. On this trade, in the first instance, will fall the burden of the 4 per cent. increase¹ (in Turkish Customs) until it is passed on to the Turkish consumer. There will be a great outcry when the increase is made, and I shall have all I can do to get public opinion here to recognize that participation in the Bagdad Railway is an adequate *quid pro quo* for a new burden upon British trade, only a part of which is interested in Mesopotamia. This is my first difficulty. It would be insuperable if I had to make another set of concessions as well.

In the next place, with regard to any understanding with Germany: the attention of public opinion here is concentrated on the mutual arrest or decrease of naval expenditure as *the* test of whether an understanding is worth anything. In the first overtures of Bethmann-Hollweg last year I felt that the naval question was not sufficiently prominent. Since then it has receded into the background, and the perspective of his last proposals is therefore even less advantageous. This is an important point.

In the third place, there is this difficulty with regard to any general political understanding: we cannot sacrifice the friendship of Russia or of France. There is no intention of using either for aggressive purposes against Germany. When Ger-

¹ The general idea of the negotiations on the Bagdad Railway was that the Germans should cede the southern section of the railway to us, and that we should consent to a 4 per cent. increase in Turkish customs to enable the Turks to make good their kilometric guarantee for the construction of the line.

many settled her difficulty with France about Morocco, not only was I free from jealousy, but I had a sense of absolute relief. I had hated the prospect of friendship with France involving friction with Germany, and I rejoiced when this prospect disappeared. My attitude is the same with regard to Germany's difficulty with Russia about Persia. Also, I am quite sure that neither France nor Russia wishes to quarrel with Germany: indeed, I know that they wish to avoid a quarrel. So on this ground I am quite easy. But I cannot enter into any agreement with Germany which would prevent me from giving to France or Russia, should Germany take up towards either of them an aggressive attitude such as she took up towards France about Morocco, the same sort of support as I gave to France at the time of the Algeciras Conference and afterwards until she settled her difficulty with Germany. Any agreement which prevented the giving of such support would obviously forfeit the friendship of France and Russia, and this is what makes me apprehensive of trouble in finding a political formula.

—Yours sincerely,

E. GREY.

FOREIGN OFFICE,
October 26, 1910.

MY DEAR GOSCHEN,—I must defer comments upon the Chancellor's proposals about the Navy and the political understanding until we have had time for consideration.

But meanwhile I wish to say that the German suggestion that France and Russia ought to become parties to a naval agreement is very welcome:

for it opens the way for our saying, at an opportune moment, what I have always thought to be the only possible solution, that France and Russia must be parties to a political agreement. Further, with the present prospect of great naval expenditure by the Allies of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, I think we may have to say that a naval agreement will be of no use unless they also are parties to it. That would bring into the naval and political understanding all the six greatest Powers of Europe.

If we can avoid treading upon French corns with regard to Alsace and Lorraine, I believe that five of these Powers would welcome such an Agreement, and a diminution of naval expenditure; for not one of these five Powers has designs of aggrandizement, and they all desire peace. But on Germany's part such an Agreement would mean the renunciation of ambitions for the hegemony of Europe. The way in which she receives the proposal, if it is eventually made, will be a test of whether she really desires peace and security from all attack for herself, or whether she has ambitions which can be gratified only at the expense of other Powers.—Yours sincerely,

E. GREY.

LONDON,
March 5, 1913.

MY DEAR GOSCHEN,—Nicolson showed me your private and personal letter to him, from which it appears that you did not understand my motive in writing to you about Tirpitz's naval statement.¹

¹ Statement to the Budget Committee of the Reichstag, February 6th and 7th, 1913.

The fault is mine, because I had not time to explain all the circumstances.

For seven years some of the Pan-Germans in Germany have been working upon Pro-Germans in this country. The Pan-Germans are Chauvinists ; our Pro-Germans are pacifists ; but the latter are, nevertheless, very subject to the influence of the former.

It came to my knowledge that Professor Schiemann, one of the Pan-Germans aforesaid, had written to one of the Pro-Germans here after Tirpitz's speech, emphasizing the friendly nature of the statement, and saying that everything would depend upon whether we responded to it.

I had no intention of responding by proposing a naval agreement.

In the first place, I had been given to understand, indirectly, that when Lichnowsky came here he hoped that I would not raise the question of naval expenditure with him.

In the second place, if I were to do so, the naval Press Bureau in Germany would, if it suited it, construe my action as an attempt to put pressure on Germany to reduce her naval expenditure ; and Tirpitz might, at some future time, say that his moderate statement had been abused for this purpose, and that therefore he could not say anything again of which similar advantage might be taken.

But, if Lichnowsky were to say anything to me about the statements of Tirpitz and Jagow to the Budget Committee as reported in the Press, or if Jagow were to say anything to you, and we made no response at all, it seems to me that we might be

represented as having put our hand behind our back in a repellent fashion. Of this the Pan-Germans would take full advantage with the Pro-Germans here.

I think, therefore, that you might say, but only if you are obliged to say something, that the statements reported in the proceedings of the German Budget Committee will have a favourable effect upon the tone of Churchill's statement in Parliament here. This will, of course, be the case. They will not affect the substance of the statement as regards our own naval expenditure, but I hope that they will enable the tone of the statement to be less stiff than it has been before, when we have been continually faced with fresh increases of German naval expenditure.

I hope that this will make clear to you the motive of my previous letter to you.

The Pan-Germans have worked upon the Pro-Germans here with varying intensity, but with unvarying want of success so far as influencing the foreign policy of the British Government is concerned. But this is no reason why we should give them more material than we can help.

I do not, however, wish you to say anything about Tirpitz's statement, unless something is said to you, because I agree that what Tirpitz said does not amount to much, and the reason of his saying it is not the love of our beautiful eyes, but the extra fifty millions required for increasing the German Army.

Nevertheless, our relations with Germany have improved because Kiderlen worked for peace in the Balkan Crisis and Jagow has done the same, and I

shall do my part to keep relations cordial as long as the German Government will also do their part in good faith. To be sure of each other's good faith is all that is wanted to make our relations all that can be desired.¹—Yours sincerely,

E. GREY.

I must now pass to the Balkan War and the Ambassadors' Conference which were the main events of the years 1912-13.

Abdul Hamid has already been called the Equilibrium in the Near East. He had understood perfectly the forces by which he was surrounded; he knew the trend of each, its strength and its limitations. He knew the aspirations of Russia as regards the Straits and Constantinople, but he knew also that, if Russia pressed him too hard, she would find Europe once more arrayed against her to set bounds to her action, as in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. He heard, probably with anger, but without anxiety, the loud indignation of British public opinion, aroused by Armenian massacres or Macedonian atrocities: for he knew that the British Fleet could not come to the mountains of Armenia, and that, if Britain went so far as to raise the question

¹ This letter was written on the assumption that von Tirpitz's statement was not intended to lead to negotiations for a naval agreement. There is nothing in what had preceded or what has become known since to suggest that this assumption was incorrect.

of Constantinople and the Straits, Europe would intervene and prevent the upset of the *status quo*. The Great Powers dared not allow that *status quo* to be disturbed, lest they should fight amongst themselves. Lord Salisbury, once the partner in Disraeli's pro-Turkish policy, but since those days shocked to the extreme by the iniquities of Turkish misrule, had swung right away and declared that in backing Turks Britain had put her money on the wrong horse. Even this did not disturb Abdul Hamid. He had lost Britain as the champion of Turkey, but he had made an active friend of Germany. He took pains to foster and attach this friendship by commercial concessions and the attractive prospect of the development of Asia Minor. French financiers, too, had considerable interests in Constantinople. Behind all these vested interests and counter-balancing political forces Abdul Hamid sat securely entrenched.

The pressure for Macedonian Reforms worried him ; but he knew that Austria and Russia would not let outside Powers deal with this question alone, and that Britain was the only outside Power that was much stirred by it. He relied upon the rivalry between Austria and Russia to prevent them from agreeing upon anything that would be very thorough. Their rivalry with each other would limit their agreement to press him for

Macedonian Reforms ; their united jealousy of the interference of any outside Powers in Macedonia would be a bulwark to him against Britain.

As for internal affairs, Abdul Hamid could rely upon the hatred of his Christian subjects for each other. United in creed, they were divided in race ; and the repulsion of race hatred was stronger than the attraction of religious affinity. These hatreds he fostered and used, and on them, and on his skill in playing upon them, he relied to prevent internal upheavals and even a combination of Christian Balkan States against him.

All the forces, external and internal, the play of them, and how to manipulate them for his own purposes Abdul Hamid understood to the utmost limit of human ingenuity. But all men must decline, and when Abdul Hamid's powers began to fail there came the internal upheaval, the Turkish Revolution that deposed him.

The change was great. Crafty, ruthless, unscrupulous ability had been concentrated to an extraordinary and malignant degree in Abdul Hamid—concentrated, that is to say, in one person with supreme authority. Now this was gone. The leaders of the Revolution had ability, and they were not more hampered by pity or by scruples than Abdul Hamid had been ; but they were several persons, and not

one with supreme authority. Their force was dispersed among many, and soon became dissipated in personal rivalries and intrigues. Then the European neighbours of Turkey began to move to their own advantage, as it seemed at first, but, as it proved later, to their own great distress, and, in some cases, ruin.

It was as if Abdul Hamid, in playing, for his own evil purposes, upon the weaknesses of his neighbours to keep them quiet, had been wiser in their interests than they themselves proved to be when he was gone.

First Austria moved, and annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. Then Italy conquered Tripoli. Finally Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro made a league, and fell upon Turkey. The cause was just : it was the emancipation of the Christian subjects of Turkey in South-East Europe. But, in acting thus, the members of the Balkan League liberated forces the full effect of which they did not foresee, and set in motion rivalries among themselves which they could not control.

Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the first disturbance of the *status quo* of Turkey ; Italy's conquest of Tripoli was a shock to it ; the Balkan Allies destroyed it. The enhanced position of Serbia, consequent upon the victories of the Balkan Allies, made Austria sensitive and apprehensive. Finally

came the murder of the Archduke Franz-Ferdinand, and Austria, in the excitement that followed, launched the ultimatum to Serbia that precipitated the Great War. This was the chain of events that began with the Turkish Revolution and led straight to the catastrophe of 1914; but the cause of the Great War lies deeper than this chain of events, and must be discussed elsewhere.

Turkey, weakened by the Revolution and the dissensions that followed it, could not stand against the attack of the Balkan Allies. The pent-up hatred of generations was combined for the moment against her. The Bulgarian onset was particularly vigorous. By December the Balkan Allies had victories and conquest sufficient to force Turkey to an armistice and to the discussion of humiliating terms of peace. The belligerents chose London for the meeting-place, and their delegates assembled there in December 1912.

Rooms were set apart for them in St. James's Palace, and on behalf of the British Government I met them there to give a formal but cordial welcome and express our good-will to their efforts to arrange a peace.

Turkey, it appeared, could be brought to terms that would give Greece and Serbia what they wanted; but it was more difficult to satisfy Bulgaria. Bulgarian claims came

nearer to the heart, to Constantinople. She insisted on the cession to her of Adrianople, which was not yet conquered. Turkey would not yield this: Bulgaria pressed for it, and claimed that her Allies, who were all pledged with her to wage war together and to make peace only in common, should, if need be, continue the war. It appeared that peace would be wrecked on this point. I had taken no part in the negotiations; they did not touch British interests, and were not our affair; but occasionally some of the delegates paid me an informal visit at the Foreign Office. At this crisis I had thus an opportunity of conversing with the chief Bulgarian delegate and ventured to speak a word or two in favour of making peace. It was probable that, if the war were resumed, Bulgaria would take Adrianople; but in war there were always risks. Bulgaria and the Allies had now in their grasp the certainty of a favourable peace. If war were resumed in order to add Adrianople to the great aims already assured there must be some, even though it were a remote, risk. Such, according to recollection, was the tenor of my remarks. These were but tentative, for it was not my affair; and they were vague, for I could not foresee what form the risk might assume. The Bulgarian delegate replied confidently that they were prepared to take the

risk. Their Peace Conference broke up, and the war was resumed.

It is not necessary to do more than summarize what followed. Adrianople was taken, but Bulgaria and Greece fell out: Bulgaria accused Greece of exploiting the common victory to her own advantage. Greece and Serbia probably considered that Bulgaria, by her insistence about Adrianople, had prolonged the war, from their point of view, unnecessarily. The racial animosities that had been suspended in order to combine against Turkey reasserted themselves when the Turks were no longer to be feared in Europe. Roumania took advantage of the opportunity to intervene against Bulgaria. In the summer of 1913 there was a second Balkan War, of which Bulgaria was the victim. The Turks retook Adrianople, and the war ended in the Treaty of Bucharest. By this Greece, Serbia, and Roumania were left with all the spoils of victory. Bulgaria, whose army had been so effective and essential to the defeat of the Turks, was allowed no access to the sea. Roumania got some territory that had belonged to Bulgaria, and Greece and Serbia got territory and ports that had been hitherto looked upon as legitimate objects of Bulgarian aspiration if Turkey were driven out of Macedonia.

The Great Powers saw no reason to inter-

vene, except to satisfy Austria and Italy about Albania and to make sure that the gains of the Balkan Allies were not pushed to a point that would raise the question of the future of Constantinople ; for the rest, they were not prepared to go beyond mediation, wherever this might be useful ; and they sat still while the Treaty of Bucharest was signed. This treaty had in it the seeds of inevitable future trouble. It left Bulgaria sore, injured, and despoiled, and deprived of what she believed should belong to her. Any future Balkan peace was impossible as long as the Treaty of Bucharest remained. Turkey, of course, was also sore and despoiled. Thus when the Great War came, a year later, there were two Powers, Bulgaria and Turkey, hungering for a *revanche* and ready to take whichever side would give them a prospect of obtaining it. This naturally was the side of Austria and Germany : for Serbia was at war with Austria, while Greece and Roumania were sympathetic to Serbia or to the Western Powers.

The settlement after the second Balkan War was not one of justice but of force. It stored up inevitable trouble for the time to come. To make peace secure for the future, it would have been necessary for the Great Powers to have intervened to make the settlement of Bucharest a just one. This they did not do. They dared not do it, being too

afraid of trouble between themselves. They were afraid to move lest they should come in contact with each other, and yet their very care to prevent falling out among themselves in 1913 was, in fact, going to render peace more precarious in the year that followed.

The victory of the Balkan Allies over Turkey opened the Balkan Question, and the risk of consequent trouble between the Great Powers most concerned became appreciable. Constantinople itself was not in question: the Great Powers were agreed that Constantinople must be left in possession of the Turks; they were united in not raising that question between themselves and in agreeing that they would not let it be raised by the victorious Balkan Allies. The latter showed no disposition to raise it in their peace discussions with Turkey. Their gains were so enormous as to be sufficient to content them without Constantinople. The Balkan War, therefore, did not endanger European peace by throwing open the question of Constantinople and the Straits; nor were Austria and Russia, the two Great Powers most directly concerned, disposed to take an active part or to play rival hands in influencing the terms that Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia might impose on Turkey as regards Macedonia. The point of friction and danger was Albania. Turkish rule in Albania was smashed by the war; the

Balkan Allies were flushed with victory ; Serbia wanted access to the Adriatic on commercial grounds, and she and Montenegro might regard portions of Albania as part of the prize and spoil of war.

Austria was determined that if Albania ceased to be Turkish territory it should not pass into the hands and form part of the aggrandizement of Serbia. Serbia, borne on the tide of her own victories, might easily reach the point of inevitable conflict with Austria. If this happened, and if Russia felt that she was required to support Serbia, European war was inevitable. To prepare in advance against this danger, and to avoid catastrophe, I proposed a Conference of the Powers. Germany and Austria agreed, and Russia was willing ; this being so, the consent of France and Italy was assured. I did not press for London to be the meeting-place ; personally I was inclined to Paris. The French would be pleased by the choice of Paris, and the Conference would start with that asset of good-will. Also I was not anxious to have the great addition to work, already heavy, of sitting in the Conference personally. London, however, was chosen, and early in December the Conference met.

There were six of us : Lichnowsky, Mensdorff, and Imperiali, the Ambassadors respectively of Germany, Austria, and Italy ;

Cambon and Benckendorff, the Ambassadors of France and Russia ; and myself for Britain. Such responsibility as there was of presiding fell to me, but we made the proceedings as informal as those of a committee of friends, which in fact we were. We met in the afternoons, generally about four o'clock, and, with a short adjournment to an adjoining room for tea, we continued till six or seven o'clock. The Conference did not have its last meeting till August 1913, and during all that time we remained in being as a Conference though we only met when occasion required. The friendly personal relations between us could not prevent our proceedings from being protracted and sometimes intolerably wearisome. It was said after the first few weeks that Cambon, when asked about the progress of the Conference, had replied that it would continue till there were six skeletons sitting round the table.

The question of greatest difficulty, and even danger, was the determination of the boundary on the north and north-east of Albania, where Serbia claimed more than Austria was willing to allow. There was an acute crisis when Montenegro got hold of Scutari, which Austria was determined that Montenegro should not have. Later on, Italy was interested in the limits to be set to Greek acquisitions of territory on the south side of Albania. During a

great part of the time first the war and then the resulting peace negotiations between the Balkan Allies and Turkey were in progress, and these from time to time occupied the attention of the Conference. But when differences between the Balkan Allies and Turkey were discussed the music of the Conference was more subdued and less harsh than when we were endeavouring to set the tune to which Serbia and Montenegro should keep step on the frontiers of Albania. Indeed, at one time there was a tendency to busy ourselves with peace negotiations between Turkey and the Balkan Allies, when we were making no progress with the Albanian question that threatened to disturb our own peace. At one such moment I said that it would become misleading and undignified to continue our sittings unless we could deal with the question of the Albanian frontier and make an agreement about it. It was almost ridiculous, I urged, for us to be attempting to make peace between Turkey and the Allies if the question of the Albanian frontier was to remain in suspense, causing increasing anxiety and difficulty between the Great Powers. That, however, was said in February, after the Conference had been in existence for some two months and a half.

The start of the Conference in December was easy. The Austrian contention was that

Albania must be kept as an independent and substantial entity, but Austria was willing to let a commercial access to the Adriatic, through Albania, be secured to Serbia by international arrangement. These were the cardinal points and, if they were not accepted, there could be no agreement. I had ascertained that Russia would in principle accept them. At our first meeting Mensdorff stated the Austrian contention as the basis for discussion. Benckendorff replied at once that he accepted it. Mensdorff's manner gave the impression of one who heard news that is almost too good to be true. There was a note of interrogation from him ; and Benckendorff, who had clear instructions, reported the Russian acceptance without qualification. The life of the Conference was then assured ; it was not still-born ; but the troubles of life were yet before it, and European peace would depend upon the settlement of frontier details. These have no importance now. The records of the Conference have been examined for me ; I am told that they make exceedingly dull and confused reading. I can well believe it ; even the short analysis made to refresh my memory has little interest for a post-war reader. From time to time the ship of negotiation stuck on some shoal, but it was always, though often after much difficulty, floated off and onwards on some little rising tide of opportune con-

cession, or on some buoyant formula. The sort of difficulty we had to solve was this: Serbia would claim for herself something more, something that had been part of Turkish Albania; then Austria would object. Serbia would say it was by population mainly Serbian; Austria would deny the fact; there were villages where even experts might differ about racial affinities. We did not set much store by territorial merits in these details. Our efforts were concentrated on getting something to which both Austria and Russia would agree. Russia would support Serbia in claiming some village as Serb; Austria would contend that it must be Albanian. If the Conference could not get an agreement Austria might launch an ultimatum, or even take peremptory action against Serbia. Then the whole prestige of Austria and Russia in the Balkans would be at stake, and so would the peace of Europe. The details with which we dealt were insignificant—in themselves mere sparks; but we were sitting on a powder-magazine.

One instance shall be recounted as a good illustration of the difficulties the Conference had to overcome, and also of the spirit in which we worked. It has remained fresh in my memory.

Serbia claimed a village called Djakova. Austria made a point of its being kept for

Albania. Russia would not give way about Serbia's claim ; Austria was stiff and positive. There was deadlock. Nothing more could be done till either Mensdorff or Benckendorff could get instructions that would ease the situation. The Conference ceased to work on the Albanian frontier ; the diplomatic safety-valve, for to this the Conference might be compared, was for the time shut down. Days, even a week or two I think, passed : we could do nothing, and we knew that pressure might be rising all the time. Probably I saw Mensdorff and Benckendorff separately, and perhaps Lichnowsky too, to explore the possibilities of concession, but of this I have no certain recollection. One morning a message was brought to me, at my house in London, that the Austrian Ambassador wanted to see me on an urgent matter ; I sent back a message asking him to come to my house at once. In a few minutes Mensdorff arrived. The room in the house that I occupied then was small ; on a table in the middle stood daffodils and other spring flowers sent to me from Fallodon and placed in tall glasses of water. Mensdorff entered briskly, even a little breathless with haste, delighted with the good news he brought and exclaiming, " We give up Djakova ! " As he bustled quickly into the room, his full-skirted frock-coat, swaying as it passed the flower-table, brushed the heads of some

daffodils ; the resentful daffodils tilted their glass and emptied the water down the skirts of Mensdorff's coat. Some perturbation ensued ; I fetched a towel and swathed the coat as best I could. Then we fraternized over Djakova. Mensdorff was genuinely pleased to bring the news. He wanted peace ; he knew that we all wanted peace ; and the block was removed, and the Conference could go on again.

The Austrians, while agreeing that Djakova should be assured to Serbia, stipulated that Serbia should cease hostilities and evacuate territories assigned to Albania. I at once urged strongly at St. Petersburg that Russia should accept this condition. Russia did so, and I then prepared for immediate collective representations to Serbia and Montenegro.

This incident was over ; the Great Powers were in agreement. More trouble remained about other things, but by these methods, and in this spirit, we got through.

Another storm there was about Scutari. The Great Powers having decided that, in order to preserve peace among themselves, they must take in hand the frontier of Albania, we warned Serbia and Montenegro that it was of no use for them to continue to fight the Turks in that region. Serbia and Montenegro would get without further fighting all that Austria, in agreement with the other

Great Powers, was willing to let them have. On the other hand, Serbia and Montenegro, however much of Albania they conquered, would not be allowed to keep more than the Powers were agreed to concede to them.

For instance, on March 11, 1913, it appears that I told the Serbian Chargé d'Affaires that the question of Scutari would be decided by the Powers ; that " for Serbia and Montenegro to pursue operations there is so useless that it appears to me to be criminal ! " The Serbian contention was that to discontinue these operations would release Turkish troops to fight against Serbia elsewhere. I urged that this contention was not applicable to Scutari, and the conversation was repeated to the Montenegrin delegate in London.

The advice was of no avail. I do not remember that any advice of the kind was ever of any use even when it represented a consensus of opinion of the Powers and was backed by irrefutable arguments. Montenegro continued the siege of Scutari, and took the place in April.

Then Austria demanded that Montenegro should be made to evacuate Scutari by international action : if not, Austria would act alone, and that might be the beginning of trouble that would threaten Europe. None of the Powers thought it reasonable to support Montenegro in the occupation of a position

which Austria considered strategically menacing to herself. We had, therefore, no difficulty in coming to an agreement in principle in the Conference ; but the various methods to be employed to induce Montenegro to evacuate Scutari gave rise to tedious discussions. At one extreme was the suggestion to land troops and to compel the evacuation ; at the other was a proposal to give Montenegro money compensation—in other words, to bribe the ruling authority to leave the place. We ourselves would not co-operate in the use of troops, but were ready to join in a naval demonstration. Eventually a blend of the threat of coercion and the offer of money compensation settled the matter to the satisfaction of Austria, perhaps also to the satisfaction of the King of Montenegro, and this danger to European peace was laid to rest.

It is needless to describe questions that arose about the southern frontier of Albania. My own part was mainly to discover whether we might ease the general situation and facilitate peace in the Near East by restoring to Turkey certain Ægean Islands. Italy held these islands as a pledge for the fulfilment by Turkey of the terms of peace arranged after the Turco-Italian War about Tripoli. The Italian Ambassador told us that no Italian Government could stand if these islands were evacuated while the terms of the Turco-

Italian Treaty were unfulfilled. The following extract gives my comment on treaties with Turkey :

I observed that if the fulfilment of a treaty by Turkey was the condition for the continuance of the occupation, as Turkey never fulfilled a treaty entirely, occupation might be indefinitely prolonged. Indeed, I said subsequently to the Austrian Ambassador alone, that, to make a thing dependent upon the fulfilment of a treaty by Turkey, though it was not exactly equivalent to a freehold, might almost be regarded as equivalent to a 999 years' lease.

This was at the end of July. On August 1 I seem to have said that certain changes in the situation, notably the occupation of Adrianople by the Turks, would justify the Powers in reserving their decision about the islands. The Russian Ambassador "seemed to think the idea of using the islands as a lever to get the Turks out of Adrianople not unattractive."

After August 1913 the Conference did not meet again. There was no formal finish ; we were not photographed in a group ; we had no votes of thanks ; no valedictory speeches ; we just left off meeting. We had not settled anything, not even all the details of Albanian boundaries ; but we had served a useful purpose. We had been something to which point after point could be referred ; we had been a means of keeping all the six Powers in

direct and friendly touch. The mere fact that we were in existence, and that we should have to be broken up before peace was broken, was in itself an appreciable barrier against war. We were a means of gaining time, and the longer we remained in being the more reluctance was there for us to disperse. The Governments concerned got used to us, and to the habit of making us useful. When we ceased to meet, the present danger to the peace of Europe was over ; the things that we did not settle were not threatening that peace ; the things that had threatened the relations between the Great Powers in 1912-13 we had deprived of their dangerous features.

My own part in this Conference seems very drab and humdrum in recollection. British interests were not affected by the destiny of Djakova or Scutari, and my part was not to initiate or to shape a policy, but to serve as a useful and patient mediator between Russia and Austria, to be diligent in finding the point of conciliation, and burying the point of difference.

I believe I got the confidence of all the Ambassadors in this Conference, for they felt I was not in pursuit of triumph or prestige for British diplomacy, and that Britain's one paramount interest in the whole affair was that peace should be preserved. If this was done British interest was served. We did

indeed wish to preserve also the Entente with France and Russia ; but France did not want trouble to come upon her from a Balkan dispute in which French interests were not concerned ; and Russia, though she would not stand a second humiliation like that of the Bosnia-Herzegovina dispute, was conciliatory and anxious only to maintain her position in the Balkans without striving to increase it at the expense of Austria. Germany had evidently determined, after the Agadir business of 1911, that she did not want trouble again so soon, and this no doubt influenced Austrian policy to be moderate. The rôle of mediator was therefore consistent with the maintenance of the Entente. If a concession was made by Russia or by Austria, it was never exploited as a diplomatic " score " or used like a victory to press a further advance. On the contrary, if a concession was made, as by Austria in the case of Djakova, it was used as a reason for urging moderation and concession on the other side. To this end the Conference worked as quietly as it could ; the Press was never exploited or inspired in the interest of any individual or Government. Had this been done, it would have been fatal to our work. An atmosphere of reticence, even to the point of dullness, is favourable, provided there be at work good faith and a living desire to keep the peace. Sensation and *éclat* pro-

duce the atmosphere that is favourable to storms. To avoid creating that atmosphere will be the great difficulty of "open" diplomacy, if by that phrase is meant daily publicity.

The wisdom and experience of Cambon were very helpful in our discussions, but his rôle was not an active one. France as an Ally felt bound to support Russia ; but she followed, and did not wish to lead. Cambon's help in drafting was invaluable, and he sat through all our proceedings and took part in the drudgery of drafting without a sigh of impatience ; but I felt that he was not altogether satisfied with my conduct. My impression was that he feared that Russia might again suffer in prestige and that this might react unfavourably upon the Franco-Russian Alliance and the Entente with us. To guard against this he would have liked a little less neutrality, even a little more partisanship, in my attitude. He may also have thought me somewhat wooden and wanting in resource to make the Conference move when it stuck on some trivial difficulty. Certainly I have the impression that he was critical, but the grounds for this are mere surmise ; he never expressed them.

Benckendorff I felt to be entirely approving. He showed no apprehension that Russian prestige would suffer from the way things

were going, and seemed to be content with the line I took, to understand that it was taken solely to get fair terms and to secure peace, not at all from indifference to Anglo-Russian friendship or in order to effect a British *rapprochement* with Germany and Austria at the expense of Russia and France. The spirit in which Mensdorff worked has been described above. Both he and Benckendorff had to carry out the instructions of their Governments and did so faithfully and, when necessary, firmly ; but they worked for agreement, and were delighted when they could help towards it.

In the most acute matters, such as Scutari, Italy was concerned as a Member of the Triple Alliance. She was therefore on Austria's side ; but Austria's fears for her position in the Adriatic did not touch Italy's heart. Italy did not feel called upon, to put it mildly, to be more Austrian than Austria in dealing with Montenegro. Except, therefore, when Italy's interest in Southern Albania or in the islands was touched upon towards the end of the Conference, Imperiali, the Italian Ambassador, had not to take a leading part. But Imperiali had a natural disposition to friendship and good-will that was both pleasant and helpful, and this he never failed to contribute.

Very important was the attitude of Ger-

many. I believe that from the beginning Germany intended the Conference to succeed ; otherwise she would not have agreed to it at all. She was not prepared to hustle Austria, and often she allowed things to drag. But Germany was determined that war should be avoided, and for this purpose she had a whole-hearted representative and agent in Lichnowsky. He hated the notion of war, and, Russia having at the outset conceded fairly the principle of an independent Albania, Lichnowsky made it evident that he considered the details in dispute not worth a European war. His official rôle was to support Austria, but he would sometimes show contempt for the importance attached to, and the time spent upon, the allocation of some village on the Albanian frontier.

It did not occur to any of us to suggest that we should be kept in existence as a Conference, as a body ready to be called together at any moment, to which future Balkan, or indeed any troubles between the Great Powers, might be referred. We could not have suggested this officially ourselves : it was not for us as a body to magnify our own importance. Still less could the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs have proposed that there should be a permanent body in London, with himself as President, to settle continental troubles. Such a pro-

posal would have been resented as giving Britain an undue predominance and advantage: the very fact that London had been accepted as the place for this Conference would have been a reason why some other capital should have had its turn for the next one. So far as I know, the good faith, the good-will, the single-mindedness, the freedom from all egotism and personal rivalries that had been characteristic of this Conference, of all its members individually and collectively, made no impression, or none but a passing impression, upon the Governments in Europe. These qualities were of little value before the war, not because they did not exist, but because hardly anybody believed in their existence.

The members of the Ambassadors' Conference of 1912-13 were all alive, available, and at their posts in 1914; but no one in Berlin or Vienna seems to have remembered the past or found in the recollection of 1912-13 any hope for the future. So, when the crisis came on 1914, although the suggestion of settling by the same machinery as in 1912 was made, it was dismissed peremptorily by Germany and Austria. Had there been two men, one in Vienna and one in St. Petersburg, wise enough to foresee their perils, one great enough to propose and the other great enough to accept the suggestion of making the London

Conference, or something like it, a permanent machine, future Balkan disputes might have been settled with increasing ease. But there were no such statesmen in St. Petersburg or Vienna. Austria was fascinated by the strength of the German Army and felt secure, and Russia and France were preoccupied by fear of it. In 1912-13 the current of European affairs was setting towards war. Austria and Russia were drifting with it, and dragging the other Powers in the same fatal direction. In agreeing to a Conference, and forming one in 1912, it was as if we all put out anchors to prevent ourselves from being swept away. The anchors held. Then the current seemed to slacken and the anchors were pulled up. The Conference was allowed to dissolve. We seemed to be safe. -In reality it was not so ; the set of the current was the same, and in a year's time we were all swept into the cataract of war.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST DAYS OF PEACE

King George's Visit to Paris—A Reminiscence of the Review—A Request from the French—Naval Conversations with Russia—Reasons for Consenting—The French Motive and the Russian—Questions in Parliament and the Answer—Explanatory Despatches—Sazonof's Visit to Balmoral—Bethmann-Hollweg's Allegation and the Facts—An Unwarranted Suggestion—The European Situation in June 1914—Failure of Proposals to abate Armaments—Germany and the "Naval Holiday"—An Apparently Improving Situation—A Conversation with Lichnowsky—Opinion in France, Germany, and Russia.

IN April 1914 the King paid a ceremonial state visit to Paris. It was customary for Sovereigns, in the years after their accession, to take opportunities of paying these visits to other Sovereigns and heads of States in European capitals. Human nature seems everywhere and in all races to have created and to observe rules of etiquette. Every class has them. They are generally upheld, and the observance of them seems to give mutual satisfaction. Few people affirm that they enjoy them, but the neglect or breach of them is resented, though they take up much time that might otherwise be given to work or pleasure.

King George had not yet paid any of these complimentary visits. The year 1911 had been taken up with his Coronation; 1912 and 1913 had been overshadowed by the trouble that threatened war between Austria and Serbia, and the condition of European politics had not been suitable for planning State visits. These must be arranged some weeks or even months in advance, and if, when the date fixed for one of them approaches, a crisis has arisen in Foreign Affairs the visit adds an inconvenient complication. It may be inopportune and inconvenient to the two Governments concerned, who may at the time be preoccupied with difficult or dangerous points of policy; or it may add to the suspicions of other Governments. Yet to cancel the visit may emphasize the danger of the crisis and make it seem worse than it really is. So it is necessary to study the international weather-chart very carefully, and to make the most accurate forecast possible for some time ahead. In the early months of 1914 the international sky seemed clearer than it had been. The Balkan clouds had disappeared. After the threatening periods of 1911, 1912, and 1913 a little calm was probable, and, it would seem, due. Surely after so much disturbance there would be a general wish to enjoy the finer weather. There seemed to be no reason why King

George should not, in 1914, begin the practice of complimentary visits that had been observed by King Edward and other contemporary or preceding Sovereigns.

France was Britain's nearest neighbour ; she was also the country with which our relations had become most cordial and intimate. The French wished for the visit. To make the first visit to France seemed as natural as to make it elsewhere would have been questionable. So in April 1914 the King went to Paris, and this time, as Secretary for Foreign Affairs, I went in attendance. All the circumstances of the visit were auspicious. The weather was such as April alone can give, and of which she gives so little. It was bright without being hot, the glorious brightness of summer combined with the freshness of spring. The horse-chestnuts in Paris were in flower ; the foliage was a tender green. The cold months were over, and all things growing were opening to the early warmth. Men, women, and children were out of doors to enjoy it.

A Review was held at Vincennes in honour of the King. We drove slowly in State procession through the streets, which were lined with crowds of spectators. All the people seemed happy, and at ease. There was not one Chauvinist cry. The reception was most friendly, but there was nothing that gave it

the character of a bellicose gesture or defiant demonstration.

A review is indeed a display of arms, but a review of troops on occasions such as this is too usual an affair to be warlike ; the firing of the guns is scarcely more suggestive of war than it is on the occasion of a royal birthday. It is external, and intended to be ornamental ; it strikes the ears but does not touch the spirit.

What did touch my spirit was the study of the two French cavalry soldiers who rode beside the carriage in which was my place in the procession. The King and the President (M. Poincaré) were in the first ; in one of the carriages behind I was seated by the Premier, M. Doumergue. Cavalry rode in line on each side of the procession. We went slowly ; the same two cavalry soldiers rode close beside me all the way out and all the way back. They were of two very different and opposite types. One was of swarthy complexion, with dark brown hair, a snub nose, and stolid expression ; thick-set, sturdy body ; a typical son of the soil ; a fellow to break up the clods of stiff land, to sow, to reap, to harvest, to do all manner of work on the land ; one who would carry on through all changes of weather unaffected in body, unmoved in spirit, the very man to " stub the oxmoor," with whom readers of *Tristram*

Shandy are familiar. The other was fair, slender, almost frail in body; a sensitive face, suggesting a possible artist or poet; perhaps rather a dilettante. His helmet sat uneasily upon him, and every now and then he jerked his head, to keep it in place.

Each was doing, the dark one doggedly, the fair one somewhat listlessly, the duty imposed upon him by conscription. Each must be trained to kill or be killed, in defence of his country. Conscription was the burden laid upon France by the danger of war, by the lessons of history, and by present conditions. Each of these two young men, at the age when life should be developing in different ways, according to talent and temperament, was bearing his individual share of this common burden.

It brought home to me, as I had never felt it before, what conscription meant. I thought of what it was in the affairs of mankind that made conscription necessary; how unnatural it was that all this should be accepted and taken as a matter of course. The thought stirred in me restlessly but aimlessly, like something ill at ease and yet not seeking ease, for was not conscription accepted generally on the Continent, and was it not futile to expect there would be any change? We, at any rate, with our small army and with no conscription ourselves, could not bring about

a change in continental armies and military systems. These great armies and alliances and counter-alliances had come into being independently of us and of British policy. We could not influence them.

And yet, what an injury it was that in great nations young men in the prime of their youth should be taken from their homes, from useful, productive or congenial occupations for which they were fit, and for three years trained to something for which they were not either by talent or temperament disposed ! Surely relations between civilized nations that made such a system necessary were contrary to all good sense and reason.

And these crowds of people enjoying the fine April day, why should they wish to disturb the peace that made enjoyment possible ? And why should anyone wish to disturb them ? Such reflections I pursued in the long, slow drive out from Paris and back to it. The French Premier did not speak English ; my French was soon exhausted ; we were each occupied in acknowledging from time to time some greeting from the crowd ; and after the first few minutes we conversed but little with each other.

The contrast of that peaceful day, with apparent happiness and content about us, was often present to me after the catastrophe came ; and the faces and figures of the two

cavalry soldiers were clear-cut in memory. Were they taken from the cavalry and put into the trenches? Were they killed, or are they still alive? There is often some quite trivial thing that stands out clear in memory for no apparent reason, however momentous or terrible are the things with which it is associated.

All the arrangements for the visit were excellently planned and executed by the French. There was nothing that departed from the ordinary routine of such occasions. There was a great banquet at which complimentary speeches were made, carefully prepared to emphasize friendship between France and Britain, without giving offence to anyone else.

Was this all? Had France and ourselves been concerned alone it would have been all. The State visit was not a long one; the time was nearly all allocated to ceremonies; there was little opportunity for serious discussion of anything. Serious business between France and Britain was transacted by me with Cambon in London, or through Bertie in Paris, who were both entirely trusted by each Government. No special opportunity was needed for discussion, and, if it had been needed, the State visit would not have provided one.

On the last morning, however, I was asked

to go to the Quai d'Orsay. Bertie and Cambon were present, and I think one or two of the staff of the French Foreign Office besides myself and the French Minister for Foreign Affairs. As far as I recollect it was Cambon who mainly conducted the conversation with me, as he was used to conversing with me in London. The French said that there was nothing in the relations between France and Britain of which they felt it necessary or wished at that moment to speak. But there was something they wished to ask as regards Russia. Russia knew of the conversations between the British and French General Staffs, and, in order to make Russia feel that she was not kept at arm's length, it was very desirable that there should be something of the same kind with Russia. There was no question of our undertaking any obligation whatever; this was not asked. Nor was there any reason for the General Staffs of the British and Russian Armies to communicate. Geographical separation made it impossible for British and Russian armies to fight side by side in war against Germany, as the British and French armies might do. If Britain decided to participate in such a war, it would make no difference to the use of her Army, whether the British and Russian Staffs had consulted together or not. The part to be taken by the British Expeditionary

Force, if it did take part, was settled by what had passed between the British and French General Staffs. There need be no suggestion of military conversations with Russia.

There was, however, reason why British and Russian naval authorities should have some previous consultation as to the parts to be played by the respective fleets in the event of Britain taking part in a war. The French did not themselves attach great importance to this from the point of view of strategy; they did not estimate very highly the value of the Russian Fleet in a war against Germany. But they did attach great importance to it for the purpose of keeping Russia in good disposition, and of not offending her by refusing.

I could see little if any strategic necessity or value in the suggestion. To my lay mind it seemed that, in a war against Germany, the Russian Fleet would not get out of the Baltic and the British Fleet would not get into it; but the difficulty of refusing was obvious. To refuse would offend Russia by giving the impression that she was not treated on equal terms with France; it might even give her the impression that, since we first agreed to military conversations with France, we had closed our minds against participation in a war. To give this impression might have unsettling consequences, as well as being

untrue. On the other hand, it was unthinkable that we should incur an obligation to Russia which we had refused to France. It was as impossible as ever to give any pledge that Britain would take part in a continental war. The fact that we remained unpledged must be made quite clear. On this understanding we agreed to let the British and Russian naval authorities communicate, as the French asked. I never enquired at the Admiralty afterwards, but I imagine that the practical result of the consultations between the two naval authorities was not great. The Cabinet agreed to the naval authorities communicating on the lines laid down in the letter of November 1912 to Cambon, and I was cognizant of the fact that such communications did proceed. But neither these nor the preceding parallel consultations between British and French military or naval authorities ever amounted to anything like a convention or political agreement entailing any obligation on the Governments; and subsequent attempts to make them appear so are directly contrary to the express stipulations recorded in the Cambon-Grey letters.

What was the motive of the French Government in making this request to us? The Russo-British naval conversations were to be further provision for a war with Ger-

many. That, of course, is true. Did the French Government urge them because they thought war with Germany was imminent, or because they contemplated aggression upon Germany? There was not the slightest hint or sign that anything of the sort was in their minds. I felt sure at the time that they had no thought of aggression; I feel sure of it still. The idea of the *revanche*—of retaking Alsace and Lorraine—though not publicly disowned, had been tacitly given up.

In 1914 the French did not desire war with Germany—they feared it, and every preparation made was a precaution against a great peril which they desired to avoid, but which they feared might be inevitable. Had they, it may be asked, at this moment in April a feeling that the inevitable might be imminent?

There was no sign, no word to suggest that this was so. In the crisis of 1906 and again in 1911, when they had thought war to be possibly imminent, they had pressed for some undertaking or promise of help from us. We had explained that we could not give it; there was no attempt, suggestion, or request made in the visit to Paris that we should depart from our position of non-committal. There was no word of warning; no expectation of a crisis.

What, then, was their motive? I took it

at the time, and I believe it now to have been, simply a desire to reassure Russia and to keep her loyal. The French nervousness about Russia's loyalty and their alliance was very marked at the time of Russo-German negotiations about the Baltic. I do not suppose they distrusted Sazonof, the Russian Foreign Minister, but there was no such thing as a Cabinet policy for Russia. Different Ministers might be in favour of different policies. Each was responsible separately and solely to the Tsar. Everything depended on the Tsar ; he was an honourable and conscientious man, but not one of such ability and grasp as to be beyond the influence of suggestion or misrepresentation. The French had told the Russians, some time ago, of the Franco-British military conversations. It is possible that, to give these an encouraging importance in Russian eyes, an impression of some binding effect had been allowed to take root and that their political value had been thereby magnified.

Or it may be that the Russians themselves magnified the political character of what was done for their own purposes without any encouragement thereto from the French. That there was undoubtedly a tendency in this direction appears from the private letters of Russian Ministers and Ambassadors which are printed in de Siebert and Schreiner's

Entente Diplomacy and the World. In these the military and naval arrangements between the British and French or Russian Governments are constantly referred to as "conventions." How the military and naval authorities themselves described them I do not know, but they never had the character of conventions or of anything that had a binding effect on any of the Governments. But the extent to which the editors of this book themselves go in endeavouring to give them this interpretation comes out incidentally in their reference to a visit of Prince Louis of Battenberg to Paris in pursuance of these conversations. In a footnote they explain that Prince Louis was "First Lord of the Admiralty, but by no means a naval expert, so that the co-ordination in question was probably of a political character."¹ This statement is just the opposite of the facts. Prince Louis of Battenberg was not First Lord of the Admiralty, he was First Sea Lord—an Admiral and a naval expert; he never held any political post at the Admiralty, nor was he employed, so far as I know, in any political work.

It is certain that this new step of Russo-British naval conversations was instituted by Russia, who asked the French Government

¹ *Entente Diplomacy and the World*, English translation, p. 78 footnote.

to approach us on the subject. The French were willing, seeing in the proposal a means of enhancing the value of the Franco-Russian Alliance in Russian eyes ; though they did not think that co-ordination of British and Russian Fleets would add much to effective naval strategy. In any case, the French could not safely refuse the Russian request to put the matter before us. The Russians knew of the Franco-British naval and military conversations. If France had discouraged or repulsed the Russian desire to have something of the same kind between Russian and British naval authorities, the consequences might have been untoward and even serious. It would have seemed to Russia that France was cultivating intimate relations with Britain from which Russia was to be excluded. Suspicion would have taken root and grown. France would have been suspected of a design to strengthen her own position with a support that Russia, her Ally, was not to share. It is easy to imagine how unfavourably this might have been represented to the Press by those in Russia who leant towards Germany and away from France. Such are the reflections that occur when looking back on what passed at the time.

Anyhow, the Russians asked for it, the French pressed it, and we saw no reason to refuse, provided that the whole transaction

was kept strictly within the limits laid down in the Cambon-Grey letters of November 1912. This was secured by the communication to the Russians of copies of those two letters.

The thing became known to Germany, and reports of it appeared in the Press. The result was that questions were put in Parliament. There had previously been questions about military arrangements with France, and I was now called upon to say if there were naval arrangements with Russia. I give the questions and my answer in full :—

Mr. King asked whether any naval agreement has recently been entered into between Russia and Great Britain, and whether any negotiations, with a view to a naval agreement, have recently taken place, or are now pending, between Russia and Great Britain.

Sir William Byles asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he can make any statement with regard to an alleged new naval agreement between Great Britain and Russia ; how far such agreement would affect our relations with Germany ; and will he lay papers ?

SIR E. GREY : The Hon. Member for North Somerset asked a similar question last year with regard to military forces, and the Hon. Member for North Salford asked a similar question also on the same day as he has again done to-day. The Prime Minister then replied that, if war arose between European Powers, there were no unpublished agree-

ments which would restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government, or of Parliament, to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in a war. That answer covers both the questions on the paper. It remains as true to-day as it was a year ago. No negotiations have since been concluded with any Power that would make the statement less true. No such negotiations are in progress, and none are likely to be entered upon, as far as I can judge. But, if any agreement were to be concluded that made it necessary to withdraw or modify the Prime Minister's statement of last year, which I have quoted, it ought, in my opinion, to be, and I suppose that it would be, laid before Parliament.¹

The answer given is absolutely true. The criticism to which it is open is, that it does not answer the question put to me. That is undeniable. Parliament has an unqualified right to know of any agreements or arrangements that bind the country to action or restrain its freedom. But it cannot be told of military and naval measures to meet possible contingencies. So long as Governments are compelled to contemplate the possibility of war, they are under a necessity to take precautionary measures, the object of which would be defeated if they were made public. This was a necessity in Europe before the war, and it will remain a necessity after it,

¹ House of Commons, June 11, 1914.

if the system of competitive armaments continues. If the question had been pressed I must have declined to answer it, and have given these reasons for doing so. Questions in the previous year about military arrangements with France had been put aside by the Prime Minister with a similar answer.

Neither the Franco-British military nor the Anglo-Russian naval conversations compromised the freedom of this country, but the latter were less intimate and important than the former. I was therefore quite justified in saying that the assurances given by the Prime Minister still held good. Nothing had been done that in any way weakened them, and this was the assurance that Parliament was entitled to have. Political engagements ought not to be kept secret ; naval or military preparations for contingencies of war are necessary, but must be kept secret. In these instances care had been taken to ensure that such preparations did not involve any political engagement.

The record of the two conversations that is printed below will show that the Russians were given clearly to understand exactly what the nature and scope of the naval conversations were to be. Those conversations also show that the understanding with France remained exactly the same as it had been

defined in the letters exchanged with Cambon in 1912.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie

FOREIGN OFFICE,

May 21, 1914.

SIR,—I told M. Cambon on the 14th instant that the Government had considered the question of making some communication to Russia, as I had suggested in my conversation with M. Doumergue in Paris last month, and I was now prepared to communicate to the Russian Government a copy of my letter of November 22, 1912, to M. Cambon. In doing so I would point out to Count Benckendorff that, as he would see from the letter, conversations had taken place from time to time between the French and British naval and military staffs. With regard to conversations between military staffs I would say that, if ever the British Army was engaged on the Continent, what force we could spare would be allocated to the French frontier, and, therefore, we could not enter into any military engagement, even of the most hypothetical kind, with Russia. I understood that Russia did not desire a military arrangement. But I should suggest that the Russian naval authorities should ascertain from our naval authorities what had passed between the French and British naval staffs—and I suppose that the Russian authorities could also ascertain this from the French naval authorities. They would then be able to see what scope there was for any conversations between the Russian and British naval staffs. I said that I assumed that M. Cambon

would communicate to Count Benckendorff the letter of November 23, 1912, which he had written to me in reply to mine of the 22nd,¹ in the same sense.

M. Cambon said that he must apply to his Government for definite authority to agree to the communication of the letters to Count Benckendorff. As soon as he had received their consent he would let me know, and I could then make to Count Benckendorff the communication that I proposed.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie

FOREIGN OFFICE,

May 21, 1914.

SIR,—M. Cambon and Count Benckendorff came to see me together on the 19th inst.

I observed to Count Benckendorff that, as he knew, M. Doumergue had spoken to me in Paris on the subject of relations with Russia.

I had suggested that we might communicate to the Russian Government exactly how things stood between France and ourselves; and I was now authorized by His Majesty's Government to give Count Benckendorff a copy of the letter that I had written to M. Cambon on November 22, 1912.

M. Cambon at the same time gave Count Benckendorff a copy of the letter that he had written to me on November 23 confirming my letter of the 22nd.

I said that Count Benckendorff would see from the letters that the French and British Governments were not bound to each other by any alliance, and remained free to decide in a crisis whether they would assist each other or not, but that there had

¹ See Vol. I, pp. 168-169.

taken place between the naval and military staffs certain conversations which, should the Governments decide to assist each other in a crisis, would enable them to do so. The reason for these conversations had been that unless something of the kind was arranged beforehand, however anxious the two Governments might find themselves in a crisis to assist each other, they would be unable to do so when the time came.

I observed to Count Benckendorff that I understood that the Russian Government did not wish for conversations between the Russian and British military staffs. The conversations that had taken place between the French and British military staffs left no room for any other arrangement, even a conditional one, so far as England was concerned. We thought, however, that the Russian Government might be informed of what had passed between the French and British naval staffs. They would then see what scope there was for conversations between the Russian and British naval staffs, and we should be prepared that such conversations should take place, on the footing of the letter that I had written to M. Cambon and of which I had just given Count Benckendorff a copy.

Count Benckendorff raised some question of whether the conversations between the naval staffs should take place in London through the Russian naval attaché or in St. Petersburg through the British naval attaché.

I said that I assumed that the conversations would be in London with the Russian naval attaché, but this was a matter to be settled by the convenience of the Russian and British Admiralties.

Count Benckendorff further asked me whether the Russian Government should not be informed of the conversations that had taken place between the French and British military staffs.

M. Cambon said that there was presumably no objection to this.

I did not see any objection, but I said that, as Russia was the Ally of France, presumably there were complete arrangements between their military authorities for a *casus fœderis* under the alliance. In Paris, of course, the authorities knew these arrangements and also the conversations that had taken place between the French and British military staffs. In London, we knew nothing of the military arrangements between France and Russia. While it seemed to me quite natural that the Russian military authorities should wish to know from the French military authorities what military arrangements they had made with any country besides Russia, it seemed to me a matter to be dealt with by the Russian Government in Paris rather than in London.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

The incident had its reactions in Germany, as the following despatch from our Ambassador at Berlin will show :

Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey
(Received June 23)

BERLIN,
June 16, 1914.

SIR,—Herr von Jagow, who, in view of his forthcoming marriage, is leaving Berlin to-day, came to

see me yesterday afternoon, and conversed on a variety of subjects connected with the international situation. After deploring the unsettled state of French internal politics, and touching lightly on what he characterized as the extremely maladroit and tactless article on that subject which has appeared in the Russian Press, he said that the only thing which had given him real pleasure of late days was the declaration you had made in Parliament with regard to the rumoured naval understanding between Great Britain and Russia. Though he had always been inclined to disbelieve the rumour, he had, he admitted, been rather shaken by the categorical and reiterated statements of the *Berliner Tageblatt* on this subject, and your declaration had come to him as a great relief. He added that, in making its statements, the *Berliner Tageblatt* had always pointed out that they were sure to receive official denial, and that such denial need not be taken too seriously; he, however, had no such ideas, and had so much confidence in your loyalty and straightforwardness that his mind was now completely at rest. If the rumour had been true he thought the consequences would have been most serious. Anglo-German relations would have, of course, lost that pleasant cordiality which he was glad to say characterized them at the present moment, but an even worse result would have been that there would at once have been a revival of the armament fever in Germany. And rightly so, he said, because Germany, from her geographical position, could afford to run no chances. In the case of war she would have to face huge Russia and France "practically alone," and if she had to take

into account also that the British Fleet would be against her, the naval authorities would be perfectly justified in appealing to the country to make every sacrifice in order to meet that emergency. I said that no one wished to attack Germany. He said that he was quite aware, and even confident, that no Government wished to do so. But the Russian Government was weak, and at any moment Pan-slavism might get the upper hand. Moreover, there was no getting over the fact that the great mass of the Russian people hated the Germans, and that a war against Germany would be popular. As for France, he was sure that M. Poincaré was in favour of good relations with Germany, but in a democratic country like France foreign policy did not stand by itself, but was apt to become an instrument in the hands of politicians anxious to obtain votes, and to carry out the aims of their own particular party. A war-cry against Germany was, for instance, a certain vote-catcher, and it was, he said, used far too frequently. He could not help fearing that some day the cry would be raised once too often. The frequent change of Ministries was really a great misfortune. It was always a source of preoccupation to him how long a Ministry with whom he had made arrangements would last, and whether arrangements he had made with one Ministry would hold good with the next.

The Russian article to which Herr von Jagow referred appeared in the *Birshevia Viedomosti*. It was reproduced here in the *Lokalanzeiger*, under the heading, "Russia is ready: France must also be ready."

In commenting upon it the *Lokalanzeiger* merely

said that the closing words of the article to the effect that neither Russia nor France desired war, but that Russia was ready, and expected France to be the same, a result which she could only achieve by the three years' service system, showed clearly that Russia's colossal military preparations had been begun two years ago at the direct instance of France.—I have, etc.,

W. E. GOSCHEN.

I must leave the reader to decide whether von Jagow was in fact misled by my answer in the House of Commons, or whether he was taking advantage of it to improve the occasion in a diplomatic way. To me it seems probable that he knew pretty well what the real state of our relations to the Franco-Russian Alliance were. Direct consultation had now been going on between the British and French General Staffs for more than eight years. German intelligence agencies, especially the military, must have become well aware that the relations between the two staffs were intimate. The disposition of the British and French naval forces—the latter being in the Mediterranean, leaving all the north coast of France exposed to the German Fleet—was evidence that there was some arrangement between British and French naval authorities. There must have been frequent speculation at Berlin as to whether we were committed to an alliance ; whether,

in the event of war with France and Russia, England was certainly to be reckoned with. This must have been to Germany a preoccupation and anxiety, and it was from this point of view that von Jagow would naturally have studied my statement most carefully. If so, his relief was genuine, and it was justified, for, if Germany had not invaded Belgium, she would not have had to reckon with Britain, at any rate not at the outset of war, as will be shown in due place.

But if von Jagow was relieved that we had not undertaken obligations to France and Russia, the more would he have been anxious that Great Britain should not commit herself to action by turning the Entente into an Alliance. If so, the real object of his words to Goschen was to warn us against the consequences of such a commitment and to prevent it.

This despatch from Goschen is marked in the print at the Foreign Office as received there on June 23. Whether I had read it or not before I saw the German Ambassador on June 24 I cannot remember; but, at any rate, on that date I gave the Ambassador a warning that my reply in the House of Commons must be taken as meaning just what it said, and that it did not preclude some intimacy on our part with France and Russia that was like that of Allies. This

conversation with Lichnowsky will be given in full a few pages further on, as it was not confined to this one point.

A much more serious matter than questions in Parliament was the fact that copies of some (apparently) private letters of Russians about these naval conversations—letters of which we knew nothing at the time—reached the German Government. As has already been observed, these letters gave the affair a political importance that it did not in fact possess. Germany may thereby have been led to think that British relations with France and Russia had an aggressive character, and that the affair had an importance that neither we nor the French ever attached to it. It is possible that these letters were in von Jagow's mind when he spoke to Goschen. Whether it would have been possible, and, if so, whether it would have been desirable to dispel suspicion, by making it publicly known that military and naval authorities of the Entente had consulted together, will be dealt with later on in a chapter discussing what more could conceivably have been done to avoid war, and whether anything conceivable would have avoided it.

This is perhaps the most suitable place in which to deal with the statement that during Sazonof's visit to Balmoral in 1912 I made a promise to Russia going far beyond anything

promised to France in communications with the French Government. The suggestion that we should have been more forthcoming to Russia than to France is in itself unreasonable, but the following quotation from a statement made by Bethmann-Hollweg requires some notice :

STATEMENT OF HERR VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG
TO THE FIRST SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE GERMAN
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY,
MARCH 1920.¹

In the fall of the year 1912 Russia, urged by France, gave England official notice of the compact between Serbia and Bulgaria and of her co-operation. It is not understood that England raised any objection to the tenor or object of this agreement. On the other hand, it was just about this time that that episode took place at Balmoral Castle in which Sazonof informed the Tsar in the words "Grey declared without flinching that if the occurrences in question [i.e. the European War] should take place, England would make every effort to deal German power the most decided blow." . . . It is worth laying stress on the fact that England held out the prospect of her taking part in the war against Germany without any regard as to who might be responsible for the war.

It is natural that Bethmann-Hollweg should have made this comment on the statement

¹ *Official German Documents relating to the World-war.*
Carnegie Endowment Translation, vol. i, p. 18.

attributed to Sazonof in his report to the Tsar, but if that report were made without giving the Tsar clearly to understand that Britain could make no promise and come under no obligation, it was in effect an untrue report.

The record of our conversation which I made at the time is quite clear on this point, and I give it exactly as it was written :

BALMORAL CASTLE,

September 24, 1912.

M. Sazonof asked me what our Fleet would do to help and protect Russia if by her alliance with France she was involved in war with Germany. It was understood by Russia that France would keep ships based on Bizerta to prevent the Austrian and Turkish ships operating against Russia, but all that Russia could hope to do with her Baltic fleet when ready was to close the Gulf of Finland, and some of her towns must be left exposed.

I said that the question of the use to be made of our Fleet if we were at war was rather one for naval experts. I doubted our sending ships into the Baltic unless we were sure of the control of the entrance, and this, if Germany could overrun Denmark, it might be difficult to ensure. But of course our Fleet (if it could not get the German Fleet to come out and fight, which was what we should like) would shut up and blockade the German North Sea coast, and would, if we went to war, do all it could against Germany and to help whoever was at war with Germany. Our superiority over the German

Fleet, which we should maintain at all costs, would in this event set the French Fleet entirely free for the Mediterranean.

The question of whether we went to war would depend upon how the war came about. No British Government could go to war unless backed by public opinion. Public opinion would not support any aggressive war for a *revanche*, or to hem Germany in, and we desired to see difficulties between Germany and other Powers, particularly France, smoothed over when they arose. If, however, Germany was led by her great, I might say, unprecedented strength, to attempt to crush France, I did not think we should stand by and look on, but should do all we could to prevent France from being crushed. That had been our feeling at the time of the Algeciras Conference in 1906 and again last year.

Germany had shown a desire for some agreement with us to ensure that we should under no circumstances take part against her if she was at war. But we had decided to keep our hands free. If Germany dominated the policy of the Continent it would be disagreeable to us as well as to others, for we should be isolated.

E. G.

Sazonof stayed at Balmoral for some two days. According to my recollection the main subject of our discussion was Persia; a definite time was set apart for long discussion of that wearisome subject. But, besides, we met frequently and talked informally, as guests on a country visit must do; and I

have a very distinct recollection of what must have been the foundation of Sazonof's report. From time to time in those years from 1905-14 I was sounded as to how far Britain could be committed, or I was pressed to make some promise. When questions were asked formally or officially a record was made and the most important of these records are printed in these volumes. The subject, however, was liable to crop up anywhere or at any time, and I remember very well being asked whether, supposing Britain did go to war with Germany, we should restrict action to the use of our Fleet. I remember being asked the question and being irritated, not only by its hypothetical character, but because it seemed unnecessary and unreasonable. I replied with some impatience that of course *if* Britain decided to enter into a war against Germany she would use fleet, army, men, money, and every resource she had. That this would be so if we were in any great war should have been obvious to anyone.

To construe these words as a declaration of an intention to go to war with Germany, and still more as an obligation to do so, would have been unpardonable. Sazonof never for a moment understood them in this sense; neither he nor Benckendorff nor anyone ever suggested such a construction to me afterwards, or referred again to what

I had said, and when the 1912 letter to Cambon was given to the Russians in 1914 as defining British attitude, it was accepted without the faintest suggestion or hint that I had ever said anything that went beyond the terms or the spirit of that letter.

It may be convenient to sum up here the situation in Europe as it appeared to me in 1914 before the great crisis came upon us. No progress was being made towards reduction, or even towards arrest of competition in armaments. Churchill's proposal for a "naval holiday," though made in all good faith and good-will on our side, had met with no response. It is told in the *Life of Campbell-Bannerman* how his earlier suggestion for arresting the growth of armaments had been regarded in Germany almost as a threatening ultimatum. "I speak unto them of peace," Campbell-Bannerman might well have said, "and they make themselves ready for battle." The proposal for a naval holiday was not welcomed in Germany; if it was not regarded as an unfriendly act, it was far from being regarded as a friendly one. It was hard to understand then why such proposals were so unfavourably received. We did not credit Germany with really entertaining a policy of fleet superiority to Britain, and, unless this was her policy, surely a cessation of naval competition, an arrest of the growing burden

of naval expenditure, was to the advantage of Germany as well as of ourselves. We were surprised that she could not see this, we simply could not understand why the proposal should make people in Berlin angry.

It is easier to understand it now that the publication of contemporary documents from the German Foreign Office has shown the extraordinary suspicion with which the most innocently well-meant proposals of Lord Salisbury about Turkey were regarded by German Ministers and officials in 1895-6. We did not realize then how inveterate and deep-rooted at Berlin was the habit of attributing a sinister and concerted motive to any proposal from another Government. Nor was it understood, as it should be now, how certainly competition in armaments leads to war. If we had understood that, we might have regarded Germany's refusal of a naval holiday with more anxiety; if Germany had understood that, she might not have repelled so curtly our proposals to arrest naval expenditure. Unless, indeed, her authorities had already made up their minds that war was to come and were premeditating it, a belief for which there was some evidence later. On this I will only say here that the refusal of a naval holiday does not go to prove that Germany had at that time determined on war. To have agreed to suspend naval

shipbuilding for 1914 would not have diminished her naval strength in August of that year, or have impaired her preparations and readiness for war. To have accepted the naval holiday would have allayed anxiety and would have made us less likely to make preparations for war, while it would not have slackened or affected her own as far as 1914 was concerned. That some, at any rate, of the military element in Germany considered early in 1914 that the time to strike had come is probably true ; but the refusal of a naval holiday does not in itself point to there being a co-ordinated and settled purpose for war in 1914.

At any rate, the failure to arrest expenditure in armaments was but a negative feature, and there was nothing new about it. Europe had grown used to such expenditure, and to failures to arrest its growth. There seemed no reason to suppose that it would cause a crisis this year any more than it had done in previous years.

Some new troubles there had been early in the year, such as the friction between Germany and Russia about the military command at Constantinople : there was also trouble between Turkey and Greece. But we had come through worse crises than these : the Algeiras Conference in 1906, the Turkish Revolution with its temporary upset of German

policy in Constantinople, the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis in 1909, Agadir in 1911, and, last, the most dangerous and difficult of all, the complications resulting from the Balkan War of 1913. European peace had weathered worse storms than any that now were visible above the horizon. I had been more than eight years at the Foreign Office, in the centre of all the troubles; it was natural to hope, even to expect, that the same methods which had preserved peace hitherto, when it had been threatened, would preserve it still.

Something else there was, too, that may have, unconsciously or subconsciously, affected my outlook. Each time that there had seemed to be danger of war I had been more and more impressed with the feeling of the unprecedented catastrophe that a war between the Great Powers of Europe must be under modern conditions. So impressed with this was I that it seemed impossible that the rulers and ministers of other countries should not be impressed with it too. Was it not this that had, in the difficult years from 1905 till now, made the Great Powers recoil from pressing anything to the point of war?

Our own relations with France and Russia made it certain that they would not enter upon an aggressive or dangerous policy. We had, indeed, made preparations for the contingency of German aggression; but, even

in that event, we were free and uncommitted. They might hope for our help, but they knew that any aggressive policy on their part would destroy that hope.

The peril of German aggression was possible, but seemed less likely than in 1905 and 1911. Germany showed no sign of attempting again to break or test the strength of the Franco-British Entente. We had shown our readiness to meet her over the Bagdad Railway, and (as far as we could honourably do so) in the matter of the Portuguese Colonies; and an agreement on those subjects had practically been completed in the early months of 1914.¹ In spite of the rebuff about the naval holiday, relations with Germany seemed to be really improved. Such feelings found expression in the following conversation with the German Amba-

¹ I felt that the combination of the secret agreement with Germany about Portuguese colonies with our alliance with Portugal had from the first placed the British Government in an ambiguous position. I therefore told the German Ambassador that we had assured the Portuguese Government that the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance was regarded as still in force; and, to make everything plain, I proposed that this assurance to Portugal should be published as well as the revised form of the agreement with Germany about Portuguese Colonies. The latter had been initialled, but I was not prepared to sign it, unless it was to be published. The suggestion was not welcome at Berlin, and the revised agreement about Portuguese colonies was therefore never completed. This agreement was left as I found it on entering office.

sador reported in a despatch to Sir Edward Goschen :

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen

FOREIGN OFFICE,

June 24, 1914.

SIR,—I saw the German Ambassador to-day, before he went for ten days or so to Germany.

He spoke at some length about my reply in the House of Commons the other day, referring evidently to the reply I had given to a question about an alleged new naval agreement with Russia, though the Ambassador did not mention such an agreement by name. He said that the statement that I had made had given great satisfaction in Berlin, and had had a reassuring effect. There was anxiety in Germany about the warlike intentions of Russia. The Ambassador himself did not share this anxiety, as he did not believe in the hostile intentions of Russia. But there had been an article in the *Novoe Vremya* lately very hostile in tone to Germany. The Pan-Germanic element was really apprehensive, and, though Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg did not share these views any more than Prince Lichnowsky himself, he did feel that there was danger of a new armaments scare growing up in Germany. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg had instructed Prince Lichnowsky to tell me that he hoped, if new developments or emergencies arose in the Balkans, that they would be discussed as frankly between Germany and ourselves as the difficulties that arose during the last Balkan crisis, and that we should be able to keep in as close touch.

I said to Prince Lichnowsky that I felt some difficulty in talking to him about our relations with France and Russia. It was quite easy for me to say, and quite true, that there was no alliance, no agreement committing us to action, and that all the agreements of that character that we had with France and Russia had been published. On the other hand, I did not wish to mislead the Ambassador by making him think that the relations that we had with France and Russia were less cordial and intimate than they really were. Though we were not bound by engagement as Allies, we did from time to time talk as intimately as Allies. But this intimacy was not used for aggression against Germany. France, as he knew, was now most peacefully disposed.

The Ambassador cordially endorsed this.

Russia, as he himself had said, was not pursuing an aggressive anti-German policy, or thinking of making war on Germany. It was quite true that Russia was much interested, and often anxious, concerning developments in the Balkan Peninsula; but anti-German feeling was not the motive of this anxiety. For instance, when the Emperor of Russia had visited Roumania the other day, the Russian Government had not talked to us about the visit as a matter of policy, or tried in any way to bring us into it as a matter of policy. I most cordially reciprocated what Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg had said, that, as new developments arose, we should talk as frankly as before, and discuss them in the same spirit as we had discussed things during the Balkan Crisis. Let us go on as we had left off when that crisis was over. I was most anxious

not to lose any of the ground that had been gained then for good relations between us. The British Government belonged to one group of Powers but did not do so in order to make difficulties greater between the two European groups ; on the contrary, we wished to prevent any questions that arose from throwing the groups, as such, into opposition. In the case, for instance, of the German military command in Constantinople, which had caused some anxiety early this year, we had done all we could to ensure its being discussed between Germany and Russia direct, and not made the subject of formal representations in Constantinople by one group, and thereby an occasion for throwing the two groups, as such, into opposition, and making them draw apart.

Prince Lichnowsky cordially agreed. He said that our being in the group we were was a good thing, and he regarded our intimacy with France and Russia without any misgiving, because he was sure that it was used for peace.

I said that he was quite justified in this view. We should never pursue an aggressive policy, and if ever there was a European war, and we took part in it, it would not be on the aggressive side, for public opinion was against that.

Prince Lichnowsky expressed, without qualification, that the view he held of our intentions was the same as the one that I had just explained to him.

In conclusion, he spoke again of the apprehension of his Government lest a new armaments scare should grow up in Germany. He added that he had frankly told Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg that

there were certain things that would make friendly relations with us impossible.

I presume that he meant by this an addition to the German Naval Law, but I did not press him on the point.

I said that I realized that our being in one group, and on intimate terms with France and Russia, had been used in past years in Germany to work up feeling for expenditure on armaments, and there was always the risk that that might be done again. I sincerely hoped, however, that too much importance need not be attached to articles in the *Novoe Vremya*, for, just as he had had to read an article of which I had not heard before, an article hostile to Germany, so, as recently as last night, I had had to read an article from the *Novoe Vremya* containing a violent attack on us in connexion with the Anglo-Persian oil concession.

In the course of conversation I also said, in order to emphasize the point that Russia did not pursue a really anti-German policy, that there were three persons through whom we learnt the disposition of the Russian Government: one was Count Benckendorff, who, I was sure, Prince Lichnowsky would recognize was not anti-German; another was M. Sazonof, who was sometimes anxious, owing to attacks made on him in the Russian Press, as to whether the Triple Entente was not contrasting unfavourably with the Triple Alliance, and proving to be a less solid force in diplomacy, but who never showed any indication of desiring to use the Triple Entente for aggressive policy against Germany, and who used it solely as an equivoise; the third person was the Emperor of Russia, and, as I was sure Prince

Lichnowsky would know, he did not favour an aggressive policy against Germany, or, indeed, against anyone.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

What reflection does the reading of this record suggest in the light of after-events? I am sure that it faithfully represented both Lichnowsky's feeling and my own at the time, and the description given by me of our relations with France and Russia was as frank and explicit as it was possible to make it to anyone who did not belong to the Entente. The statement about the pacific disposition of France was certainly right: her whole conduct in 1914, up to the very outbreak of war, proved her desire to avoid a conflict. Lichnowsky's hope and mine that if new difficulties arose in the Balkans they would be discussed between us as frankly as in the last Balkan Crisis, that of 1912-13, was genuine; so, I am ready to believe, was that of Bethmann-Hollweg at this time. It was not fulfilled. When Lichnowsky came back from Berlin after a visit there subsequent to the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, he was no longer in the confidence of his Government. He had then nothing to tell except that he feared something very strong was preparing, and he did not know what it was. It was in fact the ultimatum to Serbia. The documents, with their marginal

notes, revealed by Herr Kautsky, tell how that ultimatum was prepared. Had Lichnowsky continued to be the trusted representative of his Government, had they dealt frankly with him, and through him with us, after the murder of the Archduke, war might have been avoided.

And what about Russia? I know of nothing to alter the opinion, expressed in this conversation, about the Tsar, Sazonof, and Benckendorff; but it may fairly be thought, in the light of after-knowledge, that more allowance should have been made for the inherent instability in Russian government; for the possibility that, in a moment of great crisis and excitement, the Tsar might be rushed into some imprudent act. It needs more than good-will to preserve peace in a crisis; it needs steadiness and strength. The Tsar was not strong, and the Kaiser was not steady, and in each country there was a military element.

The conversation with Lichnowsky took place on June 24. I am told that, in the classification of documents in the Foreign Office, it is the last of those allotted to times of peace; those that come after it are in the War Series. On June 28 the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was murdered.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FINAL CRISIS

The Murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand—Sympathy with Austria—An Unproved Assumption—The Ultimatum to Serbia—Serbian Submission and Austrian Ruthlessness—The Week before the War—Four Guiding Thoughts—The Proposal of a Conference—The German Veto—Bethmann-Hollweg and the German Military Party—The German Bid for British Neutrality—A Dishonouring Proposal—The Inevitable Answer—An Enquiry about Belgium—Russian Mobilization—Difference between Russian and German Mobilization—The Position of Germany and Austria—How it seemed at the Time—Opinion in the Cabinet and the Country—The Anti-War Party—Interviews with Cambon.

THE world will presumably never be told all that was behind the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand. Probably there is not, and never was, any one person who knew all that there was to know. An attempt to murder the Archduke was made on his way to the ceremony at Serajevo. It failed, and he arrived uninjured, but not unnaturally in a state of high indignation. On his way from the ceremony another attempt was made and resulted in the assassination of himself and his wife. The inference drawn at the time was that, if this attempt had failed, there would still have been others, and that when the Archduke started for Serajevo he

was, as far as human calculations and preparations could make him so, a doomed man.

There was more than one quarter in which his succession to the great position of his uncle, Francis Joseph, might be supposed to be unwelcome; it has been surmised that there was more than one plot to remove him, emanating from more than one source, each working independently of and unknown to the other. But, so far as I know, all this is surmise, and the desire to explore the dark recesses of the individual tragedy faded away in the distress and consternation caused by the world tragedy that followed.

In Austria the popular excitement and indignation caused by the crime were intense, and the sympathy of the world was with Austria. For the first weeks the attitude of the Government in Vienna was neither extreme nor alarmist. There seemed to be good reason for the hope that, while treating the matter as one to be dealt with by Austria alone, they would handle it in such a way as not to involve Europe in the consequences. When a crime of great and dramatic villainy has been committed the indignation aroused is not satisfied with spending itself upon the void and the unknown. If the real criminal cannot be certainly indicated, popular indignation insists that some direction should be indicated in which he is to be sought.

The distrust between Serbia and Austria pointed the direction in which to look. Austria regarded Serbia's policy as provocative. Serbia regarded Austrian policy as menacing. What more probable than that Serbian fanatics had planned this crime on Serbian soil? So far, what Austria's opinion seemed to regard as certain, did not, to opinion in disinterested countries, appear to be improbable. Sympathy with Austria, my own sympathy certainly, was not diminished by this assumption.

But when it began to be presumed that the Serbian Government was itself responsible for the crime, sympathy paused. That theory did not seem to be probable; it was even improbable; a conclusion that could not be accepted without evidence.

At length, but suddenly at the last, came the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia: unexpectedly severe; harsher in tone and more humiliating in its terms than any communication of which we had recollection addressed by one independent Government to another.

The Austrian ultimatum was not supported by any evidence of complicity of the Serbian authorities in the murder, and it appeared that both the assassins arrested were Austrian subjects. One of them had already been regarded as an undesirable by Serbia; but the Serbian Government had then been

informed by Austria that he was harmless and had been warned that he was under Austrian protection. All this gave rise to a strong feeling that Serbia was being dealt with more harshly than was just. Uncomfortable recollections of the Friedjung and Agram trials recurred.

Nevertheless, we urged conciliation on Serbia ; the peace of Europe was at stake ; even if the Austrian demands on Serbia went beyond what facts, as known hitherto, justified, it was better that Serbia should give way than that European peace should be broken. We, at any rate, could not protect Serbia, and she could not resist alone. I believed at the time, and I know of no reason to alter that opinion now, that Sazonof genuinely and earnestly, and not merely officially and superficially, urged a conciliatory reply at Belgrade. The nature of that reply confirmed this belief. It was incredible that Serbia should have sent such a submissive reply if Russian influence had not been in that direction. The Austrian ultimatum had gone even further than we had feared in the way of peremptory severity. The Serbian answer went further than we had ventured to hope in the way of submission. Yet Austria treated that reply as if it made no difference, no amelioration. From that moment things went from bad to worse.

I will now give the account of what passed in the week before the war, just as it appeared to me then, setting down what I felt and thought at the time. How far those feelings or thoughts have been confirmed or modified by after-events and fuller knowledge will be considered in a later chapter. The lack of wisdom, foresight, or resource of those who have to take a hand in great affairs must be judged in the light of after-events ; but if a true judgment is to be formed of the part played by any individual, people must know not only what his words and acts were, but why he spoke or acted as he did ; they must stand in the place where he stood, and see each incident as it appeared to him at the time. Not till they know how things happened can they form a just or useful opinion of the causes of them.

Certain things stand out very clearly in my memory of the week before the war. The general suffering and the private griefs of the war have left scars in the memory of all who experienced them ; but the week before the war also left marks on those who had responsibility—marks indelible, too deep to be obscured even by the distress of what followed.

What was said or done by me will be most clearly explained and best understood by stating the considerations and convictions

that were dominant in my mind throughout that week. They may be given under four heads, stated here just as they presented themselves to me at the time. If they are kept steadily in mind when reading the published account of the negotiations in the week preceding the war they will make the proceedings more intelligible.

1. A conviction that a great European war under modern conditions would be a catastrophe for which previous wars afforded no precedent. In old days nations could collect only portions of their men and resources at a time and dribble them out by degrees. Under modern conditions whole nations could be mobilized at once and their whole life-blood and resources poured out in a torrent. Instead of a few hundreds of thousands of men meeting each other in war, millions would now meet, and modern weapons would multiply manifold the power of destruction. The financial strain and the expenditure of wealth would be incredible.

I thought this must be obvious to everyone else, as it seemed obvious to me; and that, if once it became apparent that we were on the edge, all the Great Powers would call a halt and recoil from the abyss.

2. That Germany was so immensely strong and Austria so dependent upon German strength that the word and will of Germany

would at the critical moment be decisive with Austria. It was therefore to Germany that we must address ourselves.

3. That, if war came, the interest of Britain required that we should not stand aside, while France fought alone in the West, but must support her. I knew it to be very doubtful whether the Cabinet, Parliament, and the country would take this view on the outbreak of war, and through the whole of this week I had in view the probable contingency that we should not decide at the critical moment to support France. In that event I should have to resign; but the decision of the country could not be forced, and the contingency might not arise, and meanwhile I must go on.

4. A clear view that no pledge must be given, no hope even held out to France and Russia, which it was doubtful whether this country would fulfil. One danger I saw so hideous that it must be avoided and guarded against at every word. It was that France and Russia might face the ordeal of war with Germany relying upon our support; that this support might not be forthcoming, and that we might then, when it was too late, be held responsible by them for having let them in for a disastrous war. Of course I could resign if I gave them hopes which it turned out that the Cabinet and Parliament would

not sanction. But what good would my resignation be to them in their ordeal? This was the vision of possible blood guilt that I saw, and I was resolved that I would have none of it on my head.

The first three of these considerations shall be examined in the light of the fuller knowledge brought by after-events. This will be done in another chapter. The fourth will be amplified and explained in the course of the narrative of events in the following pages of this chapter. All four, however, combined to lead to one conclusion and to point one moral. War must, if possible, be prevented. Every one of these considerations worked in me to concentrate all my work on that one object; that was, and till the last moment remained, the motive of my action.

At this point it may be well to remind the reader that this book records what came under the personal observation of the author and what passed through his mind. It is not concerned with discussing what others have written about the war. Of war literature there is a vast amount in several languages; some of it may cover ground that is not touched upon here. To read, to weigh the value of each contribution, and to collate the whole is work for the historian, who has time to read, ability to grasp, and impartiality to judge. Here I confine myself to my own

part and that which was within my personal experience.

Day by day I consulted with Nicolson at the Foreign Office. We agreed that, if things became more anxious and the prospect grew darker, I should propose a Conference. In one aspect the proposal was hopeful and attractive. It would be on the lines of the Conference of Ambassadors in 1912-13. That was of good augury, and it could be set to work at a day's notice. The same personnel was still in London: Cambon, Lichnowsky, Benckendorff, Mensdorff, Imperiali, and myself; we were all loyal colleagues, who not only knew, but trusted each other. If our respective Governments would only use us and trust us and give us the chance, we could keep the peace of Europe in any crisis. And it would be an honourable peace: there would be no diplomatic scares; no vaunting on one side and humiliation on another. After the submission of the Serbian reply to Austria, how easy it would be to arrange peace with honour, at any rate to Austria!

On the other hand, I felt some hesitation about again proposing a Conference. It had been suggested to me, perhaps quite wrongly, that in proposing and presiding over the 1912-13 Conference I had seemed to one high person in Berlin to be a little too prominent in continental affairs. Was I to be always

putting myself forward as the composer of Balkan troubles in which Britain had less direct interest herself or through Allies than any other Great Power? Also I had an instinctive feeling that this time Germany would make difficulties about a Conference. If necessary, however, these considerations were to be put aside and the proposal of a Conference was to be made.

In discussing the situation with Nicolson, it had been agreed between us that at an opportune moment, or as a last resort, we should propose a Conference. It was not easy to decide which was the opportune moment. To make the proposal too early was to court refusal on the ground that a Conference was unnecessary and premature; possibly it would have more chance of being accepted if it came from some other quarter. Britain had taken such a leading part in the Conference of 1912-13; now it was the turn of someone else. On the other hand, if no one else moved, then the proposal must be made by us before it was too late.

My usual week-end was curtailed, but things were not yet so critical that it was unsafe to be out of town even for the Sunday, and I left Nicolson in charge that day, July 26. He judged it desirable not to delay any longer the proposal for a Conference, and sent it. This circular appears as No. 36 in the White Paper.

I entirely approved of what Nicolson had done, but I was not altogether hopeful about the answer we should get from Berlin. I believed German preparations for war to be much more advanced than those of France and Russia ; the Conference would give time for the latter Powers to prepare and for the situation to be altered to the disadvantage of Germany, who now had a distinct advantage. I was prepared for some stipulations or conditions from Germany and apprehensive that she would not give an immediate acceptance. We must be ready, if such points were raised, to give or get guarantees that there would be no mobilizations during the Conference ; but I did not think there would be substance in such points : it seemed so certain after the Serbian reply that a Conference, once summoned, must succeed and could not break down or fail. So clear did this seem that I felt that no objections of form or punctilio, no points not of real substance, should prevent any Government from agreeing to a proposal for a Conference. The way in which the proposal would be received would be a test of the genuineness and earnestness of the desire of each Government for peace. I was therefore very much surprised, even dismayed, when Benckendorff, on my telling him that the proposal had been made, expressed the opinion that the Russian Government would

not agree to it. I told him emphatically, that it was from Germany that I feared objection: she was more prepared for war than Russia or France, and she might urge that the proposed Conference was therefore to their advantage and to her disadvantage. The two despatches that follow, though they were prior to the actual proposal of a Conference, will explain what was in Benckendorff's mind and what was in mine about a Conference:

Sir Edward Grey to Sir G. Buchanan

FOREIGN OFFICE,

July 25, 1914.

You spoke quite rightly in very difficult circumstances as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government. I entirely approve what you said, as reported in your telegram of yesterday, and I cannot promise more on behalf of the Government.

I do not consider that public opinion here would or ought to sanction our going to war over a Serbian quarrel. If, however, war does take place, the development of other issues may draw us into it, and I am therefore anxious to prevent it.

The sudden, brusque, and peremptory character of the Austrian *démarche* makes it almost inevitable that in a very short time both Russia and Austria will have mobilized against each other. In this event, the only chance of peace, in my opinion, is for the other four Powers to join in asking the Austrian and Russian Governments not to cross the frontier, and to give time for the four Powers acting at Vienna and St. Petersburg to try and arrange

matters. If Germany will adopt this view, I feel strongly that France and ourselves should act upon it. Italy would no doubt gladly co-operate.

No diplomatic intervention or mediation would be tolerated by either Russia or Austria unless it was clearly impartial and included the allies or friends of both. The co-operation of Germany would therefore, be essential. (No. 24 of White Paper.)

Sir Edward Grey to Sir G. Buchanan ¹

FOREIGN OFFICE,

July 25, 1914.

SIR,—I told Count Benckendorff to-day of what I had said to the German Ambassador this morning as to the possibility of Germany, Italy, France, and ourselves working together in Vienna and St. Petersburg to secure peace after Austria and Russia had mobilized.

Count Benckendorff was very apprehensive lest what I had said should give Germany the impression that France and England were detached from Russia.

I said that France and ourselves, according to my suggestion, would be no more detached from Russia than Germany would be detached from her Ally Austria. I had emphasized to Prince Lichnowsky that the participation of Germany in any such diplomatic mediation was an essential condition and the situation was not made unsatisfactory for

¹ In the original White Paper, which was issued in great haste, a number appears with a blank under it, implying that a document had been included in the first proof and subsequently omitted. Careful enquiry has been made at the Foreign Office, and I am assured that this document is the one that was omitted.

Russia if France and England held their hands, provided that Germany also held hers.

Count Benckendorff urged that I should give some indication to Germany to make her think that we would not stand aside if there was a war.

I said that I had given no indication that we would stand aside. I had said to the German Ambassador that, as long as there was only a dispute between Austria and Serbia alone, I did not feel entitled to intervene ; but that, directly it was a matter between Austria and Russia, it became a question of the peace of Europe, which concerned us all. I had furthermore spoken on the assumption that Russia would mobilize, whereas the assumption of the German Government had hitherto been, officially, that Serbia would receive no support ; and what I had said must influence the German Government to take the matter seriously. In effect, I was asking that if Russia mobilized against Austria, the German Government, who had been supporting the Austrian demand on Serbia, should ask Austria to consider some modification of her demands, under the threat of Russian mobilization. This was not an easy thing for Germany to do, even though we should join at the same time in asking Russia to suspend action. I was afraid, too, that Germany would reply that mobilization with her was a question of hours, whereas with Russia it was a question of days ; and that, as a matter of fact, I had asked that, if Russia mobilized against Austria, Germany, instead of mobilizing against Russia, should suspend mobilization and join with us in intervention with Austria, thereby throwing away the advantage of time, for, if the diplomatic

intervention failed, Russia would meanwhile have gained time for her mobilization. It was true that I had not said anything directly as to whether we would take any part or not if there was a European conflict, and I could not say so; but there was absolutely nothing for Russia to complain of in the suggestion that I had made to the German Government, and I was only afraid that there might be difficulty in its acceptance by the German Government. I had made it on my own responsibility, and I had no doubt it was the best proposal to make in the interests of peace.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

Sazonof did not raise any of these objections, and was ready to stand and let the Conference have its chance, if Austria would hold her hand. France and Italy were ready to co-operate. Germany did not raise the objection I had feared, but, while agreeing in principle, vetoed the Conference. Von Jagow said at once that it would be like a court of arbitration, which could not be called together except at the request of Austria and Russia, and he would not therefore fall in with the suggestion :

Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey
(Received July 27)

BERLIN,
July 27, 1914.

Your telegram of 26th July.

Secretary of State says that Conference you suggest would practically amount to a court of

arbitration and could not, in his opinion, be called together except at the request of Austria and Russia. He could not, therefore, fall in with your suggestion, desirous though he was to co-operate for the maintenance of peace. I said I was sure that your idea had nothing to do with arbitration, but meant that representatives of the four nations not directly interested should discuss and suggest means for avoiding a dangerous situation. He maintained, however, that such a Conference as you proposed was not practicable. He added that news he had just received from St. Petersburg showed that there was an intention on the part of M. de Sazonof to exchange views with Count Berchtold. He thought that this method of procedure might lead to a satisfactory result, and that it would be best, before doing anything else, to await outcome of the exchange of views between the Austrian and Russian Governments.

In the course of a short conversation Secretary of State said that as yet Austria was only partially mobilizing; but that if Russia mobilized against Germany latter would have to follow suit. I asked him what he meant by "mobilizing against Germany." He said that if Russia only mobilized in south, Germany would not mobilize, but if she mobilized in north, Germany would have to do so too, and Russian system of mobilization was so complicated that it might be difficult exactly to locate her mobilization. Germany would therefore have to be very careful not to be taken by surprise.

Finally, Secretary of State said that news from St. Petersburg had caused him to take more hopeful view of the general situation.

Von Bethmann-Hollweg said that such a Conference would have had the appearance of an "Areopagus," consisting of two Powers of each group, sitting in judgment upon the remaining two Powers :

Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey

(Received July 29)

BERLIN,
July 28, 1914.

At invitation of Imperial Chancellor, I called upon His Excellency this evening. He said that he wished me to tell you that he was most anxious that Germany should work together with England for maintenance of general peace, as they had done successfully in the last European crisis. He had not been able to accept your proposal for a Conference of representatives of the Great Powers, because he did not think that it would be effective, and because such a Conference would, in his opinion, have had appearance of an "Areopagus" consisting of two Powers of each group sitting in judgment upon the two remaining Powers; but his inability to accept proposed Conference must not be regarded as militating against his strong desire for effective co-operation. You could be assured that he was doing his very best both at Vienna and St. Petersburg to get the two Governments to discuss the situation directly with each other and in a friendly way. He had great hopes that such discussions would take place and lead to a satisfactory result: but, if the news were true which he had just read in the papers, that

Russia had mobilized fourteen army corps in the south, he thought situation was very serious, and he himself would be in a very difficult position, as in these circumstances it would be out of his power to continue to preach moderation at Vienna. He added that Austria, who as yet was only partially mobilizing, would have to take similar measures, and, if war were to result, Russia would be entirely responsible. I ventured to say that if Austria refused to take any notice of Serbian note, which, to my mind, gave way in nearly every point demanded by Austria, and which in any case offered a basis for discussion, surely a certain portion of responsibility would rest with her. His Excellency said that he did not wish to discuss Serbian note, but that Austria's standpoint, and in this he agreed, was that her quarrel with Serbia was a purely Austrian concern with which Russia had nothing to do. He reiterated his desire to co-operate with England and his intention to do his utmost to maintain general peace. "A war between the Great Powers must be avoided" were his last words.

Austrian colleague said to me to-day that a general war was most unlikely, as Russia neither wanted nor was in a position to make war. I think that that opinion is shared by many people here. (No. 71 of White Paper.)

The effect of these replies was not only depressing, but exasperating. I really felt angry with von Bethmann-Hollweg and von Jagow. They had given us to understand that they had not seen the terms of the

Austrian ultimatum to Serbia before it was sent ; they had been critical of it when they saw it. Von Jagow had said that, as a diplomatic document, it left something to be desired, and contained some demands that Serbia could not comply with. By their own admission they had allowed their weaker Ally to handle a situation on which the peace of Europe might depend, without asking beforehand what she was going to say and without apparently lifting a finger to moderate her, when she had delivered an ultimatum of the terms of which they did not entirely approve. Now they vetoed the only certain means of peaceful settlement without, as far as I knew, even referring it to Austria at all. For the whole presumption of von Jagow's and von Bethmann-Hollweg's language in Nos. 43 and 71 was that they turned down the Conference without consulting Austria. The complacency with which they had let Austria launch the ultimatum on Serbia was deplorable, and to me unaccountable ; the blocking of a Conference was still worse.

I remember well the impulse to say that, as Germany forbade a Conference, I could do no more, and that it was on Germany that the responsibility must rest if war came. But this impulse was put aside ; to have acted on it would have been to give up hopes of peace, and to make it the object of diplomatic action

to throw the blame for war on Germany in advance. That would mean not only ceasing to work for peace, but making war certain, and, though the veto of a Conference in my opinion lessened the prospect of peace, there might still be some other solution. With good-will, direct negotiations between Austria and Russia might succeed; von Bethmann-Hollweg might have in mind some other means by which his influence could be used for peace. At any rate, as long as war was not absolutely certain, it was no time to show anger or load von Bethmann-Hollweg with reproaches; the issues of peace or war seemed then to depend on him more than on anyone. If we were not to give up in despair, if we were to continue to try for peace, we must not break with him, we must endeavour still to work with him. Let it not be supposed that I thought von Bethmann-Hollweg or von Jagow insincere. I have said why I felt exasperated and angry at what seemed to me their supineness and passive obstruction, but I believed them to be sincere in their desire for a peaceful solution; I accepted, without doubt, what they said to that effect. I was sure they did not want war. I was, therefore, still ready to co-operate in any other way for peace that von Bethmann-Hollweg could devise and preferred. In that sense I replied.

But now something that had always been

an uncomfortable suspicion in the background came to the front and took more definite and ugly shape. There were forces other than Bethmann-Hollweg in the seat of authority in Germany. He was not master of the situation ; in negotiating with him we were not negotiating with a principal. Yet he was the only authority with whom we could negotiate at all. Earlier in the summer Colonel House had been in London, and I had seen him then. He had just come from Berlin, and he had spoken with grave feeling of the impression he had received there ; how the air seemed full of the clash of arms, of readiness to strike. This might have been discounted as the impression which would naturally have been produced on an American seeing at close quarters a continental military system for the first time. It was as alien to our temperament as to his, but it was familiar to us. We had lived beside it for years ; we had known and watched its growth ever since 1870. But House was a man of exceptional knowledge and cool judgment. What if this militarism had now taken control of policy ? The thought of 1911 and Agadir recurred. There had then been tense diplomatic strain, lasting for weeks, but ending in peace ; and precisely because it had ended, not in a German dictated decision or in war, but in peace by compromise, there had been an

outburst in Germany against German diplomacy—of which the demonstration made by the Crown Prince in the gallery of the Reichstag during the Agadir dispute had been a symptom. The Emperor had been supposed at the last to have favoured the peaceful settlement of the Agadir affair; his popularity had suffered, and that of the Crown Prince had gained by the rôle attributed to each respectively. Even if the Emperor favoured a peaceful settlement now, would his position bear the strain of a further loss of popularity?

The precedent of 1870 was ominous; we all knew how Prussian militarism had availed itself of this time and season of the year at which to strike. The same time and season of the year were now approaching. From the moment that Bethmann-Hollweg vetoed a Conference, without qualification, without condition or reservation suggested on which a Conference might be agreed to, I felt that he would not be allowed to make a peaceful end to the negotiations. Nothing short of a diplomatic triumph for Germany and humiliation for us and France and Russia would be accepted as a conclusion by the military forces. Such diplomatic triumph on the German side and humiliation on the other as would smash the Entente, and, if it did not break the Franco-Russian Alliance, would leave it with-

out spirit, a spineless and helpless thing. If Bethmann-Hollweg could secure that, then indeed he could hold his place and make a settlement, but not otherwise. There could be no repetition of 1911, and it seemed to me that, whether he would admit this to himself or not, he knew it, and that consciously or subconsciously this was what decided his veto of a Conference.

It may be well here to ask the reader to pause for a moment and to see that he has firmly in his mind what this chapter is intended to be. It is a record of how I thought and felt at the time from day to day ; not a final judgment. If the reader feels the impulse to qualify or dissent, I would ask him to suspend it till he comes to the further chapter in which this one will be reviewed. He will then be able to compare his own qualifications and present judgment on men and affairs with mine, as they are now with fuller knowledge and after-reflection on the event.

After the refusal of a Conference one blow to the prospects of peace followed after another. I do not suggest that I thought them the direct consequence of the refusal of a Conference ; they were rather like the deliberate, relentless strokes of Fate, determined on human misfortune, as they are represented in Greek tragedy. It was as if

Peace were engaged in a struggle for life, and, whenever she seemed to have a chance, some fresh and more deadly blow was struck.

On the morning of Thursday, July 30, I was confronted by the following telegram. It appears as No. 85 in the White Paper, but it should be read here :

Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey

(Received July 30)

BERLIN,
July 29, 1914.

I was asked to call upon the Chancellor to-night. His Excellency had just returned from Potsdam.

He said that, should Austria be attacked by Russia, a European conflagration might, he feared, become inevitable, owing to Germany's obligations as Austria's Ally, in spite of his continued efforts to maintain peace. He then proceeded to make the following strong bid for British neutrality. He said that it was clear, so far as he was able to judge the main principle which governed British policy, that Great Britain would never stand by and allow France to be crushed in any conflict there might be. That, however, was not the object at which Germany aimed. Provided that neutrality of Great Britain were certain, every assurance would be given to the British Government that the Imperial Government aimed at no territorial acquisition at the expense of France, should they prove victorious in any war that might ensue.

I questioned His Excellency about the French

colonies, and he said that he was unable to give a similar undertaking in that respect. As regards Holland, however, His Excellency said that, so long as Germany's adversaries respected the integrity and neutrality of the Netherlands, Germany was ready to give His Majesty's Government an assurance that she would do likewise. It depended upon the action of France what operations Germany might be forced to enter upon in Belgium ; but, when the war was over, Belgian integrity would be respected if she had not sided against Germany.

His Excellency ended by saying that ever since he had been Chancellor the object of his policy had been, as you were aware, to bring about an understanding with England ; he trusted that these assurances might form the basis of that understanding which he so much desired. He had in mind a general neutrality agreement between England and Germany, though it was of course at the present moment too early to discuss details, and an assurance of British neutrality in the conflict which present crisis might possibly produce would enable him to look forward to realization of his desire.

In reply to His Excellency's enquiry how I thought his request would appeal to you, I said that I did not think it probable that at this stage of events you would care to bind yourself to any course of action, and that I was of opinion that you would desire to retain full liberty.

Our conversation upon this subject having come to an end, I communicated the contents of your telegram of to-day (No. 77 in White Paper) to His Excellency, who expressed his best thanks to you.

I read it through with a feeling of despair. The document made it clear that Bethmann-Hollweg now thought war probable. We were henceforth to converse upon how we should conduct ourselves in war, no longer how war could be avoided. But even that was not the worst feature introduced into new negotiations. The proposal made to us meant everlasting dishonour if we accepted it. If Britain did remain neutral, people would expect the Government to stipulate terms for our neutrality. I had contemplated resignation if war came and we declined to stand by France, and I had therefore thought nothing as to making conditions for our neutrality. This bid from Bethmann-Hollweg was like a searchlight lighting up an aspect of the situation which had not been looked at yet. I saw how difficult the situation would be even for those who were most resolved to keep out of war, if war came. If their policy carried the day, they would be expected to turn British neutrality to account, to ensure that the conditions for it were such that the British position was not jeopardized by the war. What stipulations could they make? If it was dishonouring and impossible to accept the price and the conditions here offered, what other price or conditions could they require in British interests that were not dishonouring to Britain? The

answer was clear—there were none. If it were decided to remain neutral we must, after this bribe offered by Bethmann-Hollweg, remain neutral without conditions.

There was further matter for depression in this telegram. Did Bethmann-Hollweg not understand, could he not see that he was making an offer that would dishonour us if we agreed to it? What sort of man was it who could not see that? Or did he think so badly of us that he thought we should not see it? Every thought the telegram suggested pointed to despair. But while there is still time one does not sit down under despair, only the effort to lift it must be big and the appeal must be big.

I sat down and wrote the answer (No. 101 in the White Paper) as follows :

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen

FOREIGN OFFICE,

July 30, 1914.

✓ Your telegram of 29th July.

His Majesty's Government cannot for a moment entertain the Chancellor's proposal that they should bind themselves to neutrality on such terms.

What he asks us, in effect, is to engage to stand by while French colonies are taken and France is beaten so long as Germany does not take French territory as distinct from the colonies.

From the material point of view such a proposal is unacceptable, for France, without further territory

in Europe being taken from her, could be so crushed as to lose her position as a Great Power, and become subordinate to German policy.

Altogether apart from that, it would be a disgrace for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France—a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover.

The Chancellor also, in effect, asks us to bargain away whatever obligation or interest we have as regards the neutrality of Belgium. We could not entertain that bargain either.

Having said so much, it is unnecessary to examine whether the prospect of a future general neutrality agreement between England and Germany offered positive advantages sufficient to compensate us for tying our hands now. We must preserve our full freedom to act as circumstances may seem to us to require in any such unfavourable and regrettable development of the present crisis as the Chancellor contemplates.

You should speak to the Chancellor in the above sense, and add most earnestly that the one way of maintaining the good relations between England and Germany is that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe; if we succeed in this object, the mutual relations of Germany and England will, I believe, be *ipso facto* improved and strengthened. For that object His Majesty's Government will work in that way with all sincerity and good-will.

And I will say this: If the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which

she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her Allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this, and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan Crisis, and, Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction which will follow may make possible some more definite *rapprochement* between the Powers than has been possible hitherto.

I took this to Asquith in 10 Downing Street. There was to be a Cabinet that afternoon, but we agreed that the answer might be sent without waiting for the Cabinet. Time pressed, and it was certain that the Cabinet would agree that this bid for neutrality could not be accepted. We should be execrated here and everywhere if we assented beforehand to Germany taking French colonies and if we condoned in advance violation of Belgian neutrality—for that was what acceptance of the bid meant for us. Von Bethmann-Hollweg was careful not to say that Germany would not violate Belgian neutrality unless France did so first.

I returned to the Foreign Office and showed the telegram to those whom I was in the habit

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of consulting there. It was suggested to me that the last part might not be acceptable to France. But it had already been approved as a whole by Asquith, and what I had written represented my own feeling and my last hope. We had all of us been looking into the abyss for some days. There seemed just a chance that the sight might make possible what had not been possible before. It could not be supposed that, if others rose to the larger view, France would be an exception. The prospect of war, that was hideous enough to us, must be still more horrible and menacing to France. So the telegram was sent. In the afternoon both Goschen's telegram and mine were read to the Cabinet, and they approved what had been done.

The next day, Friday, July 31, I took a diplomatic step that contemplated the contingency of war. A request was addressed to the French and German Governments asking each for an assurance that it would respect the neutrality of Belgium, so long as no other Power violated it. The request was sent simultaneously to both Governments and without any previous arrangement with France, but it was obvious to everybody that France desired the neutrality of Belgium and would do everything to preserve it so long as it was intact and would avoid anything that might give a pretext for its violation by

Germany. The step now taken in London was in close accord with the attitude of Mr. Gladstone's Government in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. On that occasion both France and Germany agreed to respect Belgian neutrality. This time France agreed, Germany evaded the request for an assurance.

Germany ceased to talk of anything but the Russian mobilization. I could do nothing to stop that. The rejection of a Conference struck out of my hand what might have been a lever to influence Russia to suspend military preparations. If a Conference had been agreed to, if even Germany had said that a Conference could only be agreed to on condition that Russia did not mobilize more than Austria, I should have had some *locus standi* on which to work at St. Petersburg. But throughout these negotiations I had been given nothing that would help me at St. Petersburg. I felt impatient at the suggestion that it was for me to influence or restrain Russia. I could do nothing but express pious hopes in general terms to Sazonof. If I were to address a direct request to him that Russia should not mobilize, I knew his reply: Germany was much more ready for war than Russia; it was a tremendous risk for Russia to delay her mobilization, which was anyhow a slow and cumbrous affair. If Russia took that risk, in deference to our request, would

Britain support her, if war did ultimately come and she found herself at a disadvantage owing to following our advice? To such a request the only answer could be that we would give no promise. If we gave a promise at all it must be to France, and my promise to Russia must be only consequential on that. The Cabinet was not prepared yet to give a promise even to France. This consideration was always present to my mind in all communications to St. Petersburg during these critical days.

But besides this I did most honestly feel that neither Russian nor French mobilization was an unreasonable or unnecessary precaution. In Germany, in the centre of Europe, was the greatest army the world had ever seen, in a greater state of preparedness than any other, and what spirit was behind? I did not think the German Emperor counted for much, but others did, and the ring of his speeches, "Smite in the face with my mailed fist," "shining armour," "sharp sword," etc., was ever in people's ears. There was, too, the recollection of 1870 and the revelations of the Ems telegram. How could anyone urge on Russia or France that the precaution of mobilization was unreasonable? How could anyone affirm that it was safe to omit that precaution? For I believed the French and Russian mobilizations to be preparation,

but not war. Indeed, the French, when they mobilized, did it with instructions that no troops were to go within ten kilometres of the German frontier. With Germany mobilization was something different. It was the last, and not the first word. The mechanism was so arranged that precaution and preparations were always taken and made. Mobilization was the word, and it was followed immediately by the blow. The Russian mobilization was therefore replied to, not by mobilization in the same sense in Germany, but by mobilization with an ultimatum to Russia that made war certain. This, too, at a moment when there seemed still some chance, even an improving chance, that Austria and Russia might come to terms direct over the Serbian trouble. It seemed to me that Germany had precipitated war. My reading of the situation at the time was that Austria had gone recklessly ahead against Serbia, believing that the history of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be repeated ; that she could humiliate Serbia and that Russia would, as in 1909, recoil before the "shining armour" of Germany and that there would be no great war. When Austria found that the parallel of 1909 was not to be repeated and that things were serious, she began to try to get out of it. Germany then precipitated war and told

Austria that, as an Ally, she could not get out. This impression was confirmed in my mind by the fact that it was not till five days after Germany had declared war on Russia that Austria was herself at war with Russia. The White Paper gives all that I knew at the time of what was going on, and on that it was natural that I should come to this conclusion; it seemed impossible to come to any other conclusion. That was then, to me, the true account of how the war was brought about.

It is of some interest here to recall that, some time in the days before the war, I remember drawing a comparison between the crisis over Serbia now and that in 1909, I think, to someone in the Foreign Office; and I drew exactly the opposite conclusion that I now suppose Austria to have drawn at first. I said that no Great Power could submit to a second humiliation such as Isvolsky and Russia had suffered in 1909. It was precisely because Russia had recoiled in 1909 that she was sure not to abdicate her Slav rôle now.

I have now endeavoured to give an account of what I thought and intended in negotiations with Germany during this fateful week, and I have explained the point of view at which I stood when Germany declared war on Russia and how I felt about it.

It is necessary now to turn back a few days from this point and describe more fully what passed with France and Russia about promises of support, more particularly with France, for the question of supporting Russia was always subordinate to that of supporting France. To understand the great and most embarrassing difficulty in which the whole Government was placed in answering the French request for a promise of help, it is necessary to review somewhat fully the state of opinion inside and outside the Government. This was very divided up to the last moment ; and when there is division on such an issue as peace or war, it cannot be bridged by formulas.

It is probably difficult for some of those who were strongly opposed to war to recall now what they thought during that last week of July. They felt so differently and so deeply afterwards, when they realized what Prussian militarism meant in war. Now, when the possibility of war appeared, there was an anti-war party in the Cabinet. As possibility became probability this party naturally became at first not less but more active and determined. It did not appear in Cabinet discussions, for neither I nor anyone tried to force a decision while there was still any hope of peace. Discussions in the Cabinet were restrained and reserved, for we kept to that on which we were all agreed—the

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endeavour to prevent war altogether. But outside the Cabinet I felt sure that the anti-war group were meeting, were arranging concerted action, if need be, to keep this country out of war or to resign if they failed in doing so. I was told afterwards, when we were united in the stress of war, that what had been assumed at the time was in fact true. This group included more than one of the names that came next after that of the Prime Minister in authority and influence with the Liberal Party inside and outside. It is needless to enquire whether the group included half, or less, or more than half the Cabinet ; it was sufficient in number and influence to have broken up the Cabinet. I made no attempt to counteract this movement either inside or outside the Government. I do not remember asking any colleague to support participation in war, if war came. There was not a moment to spare from the exhausting and exacting work of the Foreign Office in that week ; but, apart from this, I felt that, if the country went into such a war, it must do so whole-heartedly, with feeling and conviction so strong as to compel practical unanimity. If that came, all the workings of anti-war sections would be as if they had never been. If the country could be kept out of the war by such a division of forces, it had better keep out and stand

aside. It must certainly not be manœuvred into a great war by the counter-workings of a pro-war against an anti-war group.

It was clear to me that no authority would be obtained from the Cabinet to give the pledge for which France pressed more and more urgently, and that to press the Cabinet for a pledge would be fatal ; it would result in the resignation of one group or the other, and the consequent break-up of the Cabinet altogether. That was my deliberate estimate of the situation, and all I knew or heard afterwards confirms the opinion that it was at the time a true estimate. There was also more than the division of opinion in the Cabinet to be taken into account. There was division in Parliament and in the country. A section there was, no doubt, that identified Germany with Prussian militarism, and identified Prussian militarism with all that was evil and hostile to Britain. It was a concentrated and active section, but it did not express the prevailing feeling in the country. The country in general wanted peace. Some Germans cannot understand why we went into the war, because the motive that impelled us is something outside their perception. Because that is so, because they cannot see the real motive, they invent reasons other than the true one, to account for British action. One of these motives very generally

attributed to us is that of industrial rivalry and commercial jealousy of Germany. It is the reverse of the truth. Our great industrial districts, especially Lancashire, were most averse to war. Trade was good, industry wanted to be undisturbed.

Some pro-French feeling there was—quite a substantial touch of it, quite as much of this as there was of anti-German feeling ; but it was not enough to outweigh the general desire to keep out of war. The notion of being involved in war about a Balkan quarrel was repugnant. Serbia, to British people, was a country with which a few years ago we had severed diplomatic relations, because of a brutal murder of the King and Queen ; and, though that was over, and we were now on good terms, there was no sentiment urging us to go into a war on Serbia's behalf. If France were involved, it would not be in any quarrel in which we owed her good-will, as in the Moroccan disputes. It would indeed not be in any quarrel of her own at all ; it would be because she, as Russia's Ally, had the misfortune to be involved in a Russian quarrel, in which France had no direct interest and which did not arouse feeling in the French people. Even on questions such as Morocco we had carefully limited our obligation to diplomatic support only. We were not bound to give even that in this Serbian trouble.

What, it was asked, was the good of keeping so carefully clear of alliances and obligations if we were to be drawn into European war in such a quarrel as this? People were sorry for France's misfortune in being involved in war by an alliance with Russia; but was that any reason why we, who had not the risk of an alliance, should be involved in the misfortune and danger of a course that we had deliberately avoided for the very reason that we thought it dangerous? Such I felt to be how the situation was viewed by numbers of people, and I knew the desire to keep out of war to be very widespread and strong. If this feeling had not been represented in the Cabinet, the Government would have been out of touch with the country—an unsafe position in any circumstances, a most dangerous one in a crisis.

It must be admitted that if there were not an anti-war group in the Cabinet there ought to have been. Some of us, on the other hand, felt that the considerations stated above did not touch the true issue. We felt that to stand aside would mean the domination of Germany; the subordination of France and Russia; the isolation of Britain, the hatred of her by both those who had feared and those who had wished for her intervention in the war; and ultimately that Germany would wield the whole power of the Continent. How

would she use it as regards Britain? Could anyone feel comfortable about that question? Could anyone give to it truthfully in his heart any but a sinister and foreboding answer?

The House of Commons showed to the full this division of opinion. In the last week of July, Bonar Law, the Leader of the Conservative Party in the House, came daily to my room there at question time before I returned to the Foreign Office, to ask what the news of the crisis was. One day, about the middle of the week, as the news got more ominous, he said that it was not easy to be sure what the opinion of the whole of his party was. He doubted whether it would be unanimous or overwhelmingly in favour of war, unless Belgian neutrality were invaded; in that event, he said, it would be unanimous.¹ If

¹ It has been said that I must have misunderstood Bonar Law; but the statement in the text is well within the mark of what he said to me in the middle of the week. He referred only to the opinion of the rank and file of his party; not to his own opinion or to that of other leaders. I supposed that a large majority of the Conservative Party would support action to help France; but that some opinion outside the Conservative front bench reserved its decision till later is certain.

I am ready to assume that even in the middle of the last week of July the leaders of the Conservative Party were unanimous, though it was not till (I think) Sunday, August 2, that their decision was conveyed to us. As to Bonar Law's own opinion, he never expressed it to me at this stage. Nor do I remember that I expressed mine to him. Each of us probably assumed the other to be convinced that we ought not to stand aside, if France were attacked.

Conservatives were not unanimous; Liberal opinion was still more uncertain. About the same time a very active Liberal member came up to me in the lobby and told me that he wished me to understand that under no circumstances whatever ought this country to take part in the war, if it came. He spoke in a dictatorial tone, in the manner of a superior addressing a subordinate whom he thought needed a good talking to. It did not seem to occur to him that if men like himself were feeling the strain of the situation, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs might be feeling it as much, or more, and the strain was very great, and the more it was controlled in official work the more apt it was to seek relief on other occasions. I answered pretty roughly to the effect that I hoped we should not be involved in war, but that it was nonsense to say that there were no circumstances conceivable in which we ought to go to war. "Under no circumstances whatever," was the retort. "Suppose Germany violates the neutrality of Belgium?" For a moment he paused, like one who, running at speed, finds himself suddenly confronted with an obstacle, unexpected and unforeseen. Then he said with emphasis, "She won't do it." "I don't say she will, but supposing she does?" "She won't do it," he repeated confidently, and with that assurance he left me.

In the Cabinet the two groups continued to work together for the one object on which both were heartily agreed, to prevent a European war ; like two men who walk side by side on a straight road, but who see ahead a parting of the ways and are determined, when they come to it, to go one to the right and the other to the left. Meanwhile, one side did not press the other to authorize a pledge to support France ; the other did not press for an intimation to France that we should stand aside. In that, at any rate, both were wise. Between the two groups were no doubt members of the Cabinet who reserved their decision. Their attitude also was to be respected. It was not opportunism ; it was a tribute paid to the gravity of the situation. The Cabinet as a whole knew that it was not in a position to pledge the country. Such were the conditions in which, inside the Foreign Office, the demand from France and Russia to know whether they could count on British support in war had to be received and could not be answered.

The interviews with Cambon were distressing to both of us, but must have been even more so to him than to me. The very existence of his country as a great nation was at stake, and it was vital to France to know what Britain would do. Later on, when the war had shown the forces and the real issues,

it was generally understood in Britain that our existence was at stake too ; but in those pre-war days it was the peril of France alone that was clear and imminent. Britain had never had an 1870, and we still thought we were an island.

It is unnecessary to repeat what has been written at the beginning of this chapter under heading 4.¹ That was always present to me but, besides dread of the mortal error of holding out hopes to France and Russia that in the hour of need might not be fulfilled, there was the sense of responsibility to the Cabinet. At such a time, and on such an issue, he who spoke must not go one inch beyond what the Cabinet had authorized. No. 119 in the White Paper is an instance of the sort of conversation that took place though a dictated summary of such a conversation is a bald and cold affair. It goes without saying that such answers did not and could not give Cambon what he wanted nor indeed anything that was of any use to him. It has often since been a source of regret that he alone felt me to be lacking in sympathy. My own difficulties and anxiety to keep within the narrow limits of what had been agreed to by the Cabinet preoccupied me. And, besides that, I was myself a party to that agreement ; it was in my judgment

¹ See *supra*, p. 158.

all that could be said at the time ; but there was a sense of the uselessness and strangeness of my words of sympathy, when the one thing asked for could not be said.

In these interviews, under all the strain of anxiety, Cambon never once hinted that any obligation or point of honour was involved ; never suggested that, in such a crisis as this, if we stood upon the letter of the written communications exchanged between us in 1912, we should be acting contrary to the spirit of them. He besought us to think, not of obligation but of our interests ; to reflect what our position would be if Germany crushed France and dominated Europe. The only reply at the moment could be that this was what some of us were thinking about. Pressing, urgent, insistent as Cambon's appeals to us were, his whole attitude throughout the crisis was a fine example of loyalty. We each had a line that we were bound to take ; he had the opportunity of making his a fine one, and he made it so. In mine there was no such opportunity ; I felt that very distinctly, but there was no other line open to me. Meanwhile France and Russia urged, with undeniable force, that even if we could promise nothing to them, we should not give Germany the impression, or let her be under the impression, that we should certainly stand aside. In every crisis since 1905 Germany

had been told that in my opinion, if war came, we should be drawn into it on the side of France. The warning was given again to Bethmann-Hollweg through Goschen, and to Lichnowsky by me. More than this could not be said. Bluff, even if it could be stooped to in such grave moments, would be useless : the Germans would have known that the border-line between truth and bluff was overstepped. Probably things that reached Berlin in this summer of 1914, private and secret as well as official, will never be published or known. If they are it will be very surprising, if it is found that the Foreign Office was the only source upon which the German Government depended for information about British opinion ; or that Lichnowsky was the only German channel through which they derived it. If we knew how strong feeling in Great Britain was, it is certain that the Germans knew it too. What they did not understand was the difference that wanton violation of Belgium would make.

If the German Government had replied to our question with a promise to respect the neutrality of Belgium, provided that France also respected it, and if they had asked whether on this condition we would remain neutral, there would presumably have been discussion on this new feature in the Cabinet. The discussion might have been a counter-

part of that on the point of giving a pledge to help France. In this case the group that thought we should stand by France would presumably have opposed giving any pledge of neutrality to Germany. The Cabinet was, in short, up to the time when violation of Belgian neutrality became imminent, unable to give any pledge to anybody, and in that it reflected the state of feeling and opinion in Parliament and the country. By August 1, after Germany had evaded the request to respect Belgium's neutrality, this period of indecision, as far as the Cabinet was concerned, was coming to an end. How decision was attained first in the Cabinet and then in Parliament will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

THE COMING OF WAR

A Change in the Point of View—A Question of Naval Obligations—Examination of the Belgian Issue—Lord Clarendon's Definition of British Obligations—The Distinction between Belgium and Luxembourg—Mr. Gladstone's View—The Movement towards Cabinet Unity—The Speech of August 3—Lichnowsky's Last Questions—At War.

By August 1 a change in the point of view of the anti-war group was beginning to give shape to the attitude of the Cabinet as a whole. It is not possible to say with certainty how and why this change was being wrought. It is not always easy for a man to trace the inward path and steps by which he reaches his own conclusions ; so much of the working of the mind is subconscious rather than conscious. If it is difficult to be sure of one's own mind, one can only guess at the processes in the minds of others. My impression is that, as war became more imminent, men began to picture to themselves the probable scenes and events of it ; and the more vividly they saw these, the more uneasy they became at the prospect of Britain sitting still and immovable, while great

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events fraught with incalculable consequences were happening at her very doors.

The first sign of this trend of thought was the expression of an opinion that we could not stand the German Fleet coming down the Channel, and, within sight and sound of our shores, bombarding the French coast.

It might be supposed that this suggestion came as a tactical move from a pro-French quarter made and designed to shake or sap the position of the anti-war section. It was no such thing. It came spontaneously from the anti-war quarter and was based, first, simply on the ground of feeling and sentiment. But on consideration it was reinforced by a very powerful argument of a different kind. It will appear, if the reader looks back to the record of the conversations with Cambon in 1906, that not only British and French military, but also naval, authorities were in consultation. But the naval consultations had been placed on a footing satisfactory to France in 1905 before the Liberal Government had come into office. The new step taken by us in January 1906 had been to authorize military conversations on the same footing as the naval ones. For this reason, and perhaps also because the despatch abroad of our army would denude our land defence at home, it was the military more than the naval aspect of these consultations that had

preoccupied us ; but both had been authorized and were covered by the letters exchanged with Cambon in November 1912. These consultations had not affected the disposition of the armies. French armies were practically placed where they would have been if no Franco-British military or naval conversations had existed. The main French Army was in France. So with the British Expeditionary Force ; it was disposed as best suited British military arrangements and the probable requirements of the Empire. With the fleets it was different : the French Fleet was in the Mediterranean ; the main British Fleet in the waters of Great Britain. The French north and west coasts were therefore left entirely without naval defence. Had not the naval conversations then placed France (if we stood aside) at a positive disadvantage ? Had they not, in fact, created an obligation, in spite of express stipulations that they were not to do so ? This consideration did not originate the suggestion of guaranteeing the French north and west coasts, but it clinched it.

The promise to defend these coasts was given to France. The German Government were informed. They promised not to attack these coasts (of course on the understanding that we remained neutral), and this naval point ceased to have any direct influence on

the decision of the British Government. But the Belgian point had then become paramount, and the naval point was therefore no longer a decisive one.

Meanwhile Germany had declared war on Russia. France was bound as Russia's Ally, and could not remain neutral; the main German army was advancing, not on Russia, but on France, and its aggression brought the Cabinet face to face with the violation of the neutrality, first of Luxembourg, then of Belgium. The Luxembourg obligation was as slight as the Belgian was formidable. Our obligation to Luxembourg was examined. The Hansard Report of the debate on the Luxembourg Treaty in the House of Lords in 1867 was brought to me. In that debate the obligation imposed by the treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Luxembourg was defined by Lord Clarendon, the Liberal Ex-Foreign Secretary, who agreed to it :

With regard to the guarantee, I will go somewhat further than the noble Earl at the head of the Government, and say that, if we had undertaken the same guarantee in the case of Luxembourg as we did in the case of Belgium, we should, in my opinion, have incurred an additional and very serious responsibility. I look upon our guarantee in the case of Belgium as an individual guarantee, and have always so regarded it; but this is a collective guarantee. No one of the Powers, therefore,

can be called upon to take single action, even in the improbable case of any difficulty arising. (Lord Clarendon, House of Lords, June 20, 1867.)

We were all working under great pressure, and I do not remember that more than this was brought to my notice at the time. There was, however, a subsequent debate on the Luxembourg Treaty in which Lord Derby, though not less definite in distinguishing between separate and collective guarantees, gave a longer explanation of what he considered to be involved in a collective guarantee. For the sake of completeness, Lord Derby's statement is added :

In my reference to the treaty brought under our notice by the noble Lord, I hope he will not understand me as speaking of moral obligations, but of the technical obligations imposed by the treaty. To the latter only the noble Lord's question has reference, and to them alone shall I apply myself in my answer. . . . Let me give your Lordships one or two instances of separate guarantees and of collective guarantees. The first I will take is a very remarkable case—that with regard to the neutrality of Belgium. In the year 1831 a Conference of the five Great Powers laid down twenty-five articles, which were to determine the relations between Belgium and Holland, and which were to form the basis of a treaty between those two countries. The Powers who were parties to that Conference of 1831 bound themselves to uphold, not collectively but severally and individually, the

integrity of the treaty. That was a separate and individual guarantee. But, notwithstanding, in 1832, when Belgium, who had not been put in possession of the territory assigned to her by that treaty, called on the Powers parties to the Conference to enforce her rights, Prussia, Russia, and Austria declined to interfere by force of arms for that purpose ; while on the other hand France and England, taking a stricter view of the obligations imposed upon them by the treaty, proceeded to enforce it by combined naval and military operations. In the same treaty there was comprised a guarantee for the possession of Luxembourg by the King of Holland, not in his capacity as King of Holland, but as Grand Duke of Luxembourg.

In 1839, after a treaty had been made between Belgium and Holland embodying the main provisions of the Treaty of 1831, a separate one was entered into between the five Powers and Belgium, in which the obligations of the former Treaty of 1831 were repeated and renewed, and the five Powers bound themselves separately to maintain the integrity of Belgium, its neutrality and independence. The Prussian Minister must have been perfectly well aware of the terms of that treaty by which the five Powers, acting individually, guaranteed the independence of Belgium ; yet, if he thought the one kind of guarantee equal to the other, I want to know why he should have studiously altered the words and asked, not for a separate and several guarantee, but for a collective guarantee by the Great Powers for the integrity and independence of Luxembourg. . . .

If the noble Lord [Lord Houghton] is not satisfied

with my view of this treaty—namely that the integrity and neutrality of Luxembourg rests upon the collective voice and upon the honour of all the Powers who are signatories to it—I should wish that he gives us his interpretation of its effect and to what extent it is binding upon us. I will put a case to him. Suppose that Prussia with a view of making war upon France, or France with a view of making war upon Prussia, were to enter the territory of Luxembourg—thereby, of course, violating its neutrality by the mere passage of an army, for I am not dealing with the question of occupation or possession, but of violating the neutrality of Luxembourg by passing an army through it—does the noble Lord mean to say that all the guaranteeing Powers in this Treaty of 1867, or each singly, would be bound by the obligations thrown on them by this treaty to go to war against the Power—whichever it might be—which entered Luxembourg with an army? Would Prussia desire this interpretation of the treaty? Suppose, in anticipation of any invasion by France, Prussia thought it necessary to make defensive advances into Luxembourg, would Prussia contend that all the other Powers would be thereby bound to take part with France in a war against her for the purpose of vindicating the neutrality of Luxembourg? And supposing, in a case, that Russia and Austria held aloof from the fulfilment of their portion of the guarantee in the event of any case for interference arising, does the noble Lord for a moment contend that England—situated as she is, and absolutely unable to put a sufficient military force on the Continent for preserving this neutrality

—has contracted the obligation of enforcing the guarantee which she gave in common with all the other Powers of Europe? Such a construction is contrary to all the rules of interpretation, and far beyond what this country should undertake to carry through. Suppose, again, that France and Prussia, for the purpose of coming to a contest, should simultaneously violate the neutrality, in what position would the other Powers be? Should the remaining guarantors, or England alone, immediately begin a sort of triangular duel to prevent the violation of the treaty by Powers who had already violated it? It is evident the conditions of the treaty must be construed with a regard to what is reasonable and practicable; and I say, again, that by a collective guarantee it is well understood that, while in honour all the Powers who are parties to it severally engage to maintain, for their own part, a strict respect for the territory for which neutrality is guaranteed, and although undoubtedly any one Power has a perfect right to declare a *casus belli* if she think fit, because of the violation of the guarantee, yet a single Power is not bound to take up the cudgels for all the other Powers with whom she gave a collective guarantee.—*Lord Derby in the House of Lords, July 4, 1867, in reply to Lord Houghton's question, "What is the construction which Her Majesty's Government place on the words 'collective guarantee' (garantie collective) in the Treaty of May 11 relative to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg?"*

It was thus made clear that what Luxembourg had was a collective guarantee; that no one of the signatory Powers had an

obligation to defend Luxembourg, unless all the signatory Powers did so ; that no other Power had an obligation to act separately and without the others. This made our position quite clear ; the violation of Luxembourg entailed no obligation upon us to take action. We could, if we wished, make the German invasion of Luxembourg a *reason* for going to war, but it was not an *obligation* ; it was a question whether the interest of Britain, not its honour, required us to act. The question was further simplified by the fact that Luxembourg itself made no resistance to the German invasion, though it lodged a notification of it with the signatory Powers. The question of Luxembourg was therefore laid aside, and attention concentrated upon that of Belgian neutrality ; but it must not be supposed that the violation of Luxembourg was altogether without effect.

In the first place, it was the breaking of a treaty and a breach of Germany's pledged word. That was clear ; and the wrongdoing of it was not affected by the obligation, or absence of obligation, on our part to resist it. Nor did Luxembourg's submission affect this aspect of the matter. Luxembourg was helpless and had not the means to resist. There was a perceptible hardening of British feeling against Germany.

In the second place, the violation of Luxembourg had caused the study of that debate of 1867. The debate established that there was no separate guarantee of Luxembourg, but, by the contrast drawn between the Luxembourg and the Belgian guarantee, it brought into strong relief the binding character of the guarantee of Belgium. I do not remember that any of us ever questioned that, but I have a very distinct recollection of thinking with what force quotations from the debate on the Luxembourg Treaty would be thrown in the face of any British Government that tried to maintain that the Belgian Treaty was not binding on us. It was brought to my notice afterwards that one or more British Ministers of previous years had spoken ambiguously about the binding force of our obligations with regard to Belgium. According to my recollection, no such statements were brought before us at the time. The Belgian Treaty was of old date, but it had never dropped out of view. Ever since it was made its existence had been familiar to public opinion, and to each succeeding generation of public men. We had lived in the knowledge of it and in the belief that Britain was bound to defend the neutrality of Belgium. What we had before us was the action of Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1870 and the doctrine laid down by himself and Lord

Granville about our obligation to Belgium.¹ Lord Granville said plainly that British interests and honour were involved. Mr. Gladstone characteristically guarded himself against any unqualified admission that treaty guarantees should always in all conditions bind us to go to war in defence of them, but threw into the scale of British obligation to defend Belgium a tremendous assertion that this was required by a policy and a morality that were independent of time or circumstances.

And had circumstances changed since 1870? Only in this, that Germany was now more mighty than at the outbreak of the war in 1870, and the evil of a violation of Belgium graver than ever. For, if her neutrality were violated, and the violation submitted to by Belgium and acquiesced in by her guarantors, her independence was gone for ever. She must become the satellite and serf of the great neighbour who had used her as he pleased. It would have been proved that

¹ To meet the special circumstances of the publication of the alleged draft treaty of 1866 (in which the proposal was made that Prussia should support France if she should be led by circumstances to enter Belgium or to conquer it) Lord Granville invited both belligerents, while maintaining all the guarantees of the Treaty of 1839, to join in a new treaty giving Belgium a new and special guarantee during the war and for twelve months afterwards. This they did.

she had a master, and had no friends able or willing to help her.

There was no getting past the Luxembourg debate and the British declarations of 1870. How could any man, however opposed to war, stand up in the House of Commons and explain these away? In the fierce glow of this crisis such attempts at explanation would be consumed in a moment. As it became more and more certain that the German Army was going to invade Belgium, the Cabinet began all to face the same way, for we had our backs to the same straight wall.

By the end of the week, on August 1, we had before us the announcement of the Belgian Government that Belgium would, if invaded, defend her own neutrality to the utmost of her power; that made the question straight and simple. Belgium at this stage made no appeal to the guaranteeing Powers. In this she acted properly and wisely. Such information as has come to my notice goes to show that, up to the last moment, the Belgian Government did not believe that any Power intended to violate the Treaty of Guarantee. To appeal to the Powers would then have implied a suspicion that she did not entertain: to ask help from some of them, and not from all, would have laid her open to a charge of siding with some against another, and thus departing from neutrality

before this was threatened. But the announcement that, if her neutrality was assailed, she intended to defend herself, was important. If she were to acquiesce voluntarily, or even under duress, in the passage of German troops, we should be entitled to send troops to vindicate the neutrality and resist the violation of it ; but it was clear that an appeal from her for help, when she was herself fighting for what we were pledged to defend, would be peculiarly strong and moving. How could we possibly resist it ?

My recollection of those three days, August 1, 2, and 3, is of almost continuous Cabinets and of immense strain ; but of what passed in discussion very little remains in my mind, not even what part I took in the discussions. There was little for me to do : circumstances and events were compelling decision. I remember saying more than once, to colleagues inside or outside the Cabinet, that it did not matter whether the decision was to go to war or to demand conditions from Germany. Conditions meant war just as surely as a declaration of war. Respect for the neutrality of Belgium must be one of the conditions, and this Germany would not respect. The state of mind at which the Cabinet had arrived at the end of our meeting on the morning of Monday, August 3, is, I believe, faithfully represented in the speech

made by me that afternoon in the House of Commons ; at any rate, that speech was intended to represent the mind of the Cabinet, though some of the arguments used may have been my own. Where I thought I might be expressing something that was outside the strict limits of Cabinet agreement, it was carefully expressed as a personal view.

It was at one of these last Cabinets that a message was read to us saying definitely that the Conservative front Opposition benches were ready to support a decision to stand by France. There was no mention of Belgium, and all credit must be given to the Conservative leaders for their resolution and courage in making this contribution to decision at a moment when they had not before them, as we had before us, the compulsion of the imminent menace to Belgium. But the message was first read and laid aside ; it could have no influence then on our discussion. It was to the good to know it, but what mattered it now, when the issue of the Belgian Treaty was bringing everyone to the conclusion that we must fight by the side of France, and to the determination to do so ?

The narrative has been brought to the close of the last Cabinet before the speech in the House of Commons on August 3. It may be well now to say something first about the circumstances in which this speech had to

be prepared, and then about the speech itself.

The week ending with August 1 had been most exhausting. The strain for every member of the Cabinet must have been intense. In addition to Cabinets, I had the strain of holding conversations of great moment with Ambassadors, of dictating after each the summary of it that appeared eventually as a telegram or despatch to the British Ambassador at Berlin or Paris or elsewhere. Some telegrams were not dictated, but were written with my own hand. Communications vitally important at this moment were daily being received through Foreign Ambassadors in London, verbally, or through British Ambassadors abroad by telegram. These, however critical, had to be considered and dealt with promptly, for every hour mattered. All this made what was a trying week for everyone, an exceptionally heavy one for me; but perhaps it made the week in one sense easier for me. Work, incessant, peremptory work, relieves nervous strain; it allows no vacant hours in which anxiety can prey upon an unoccupied mind; it wearies, but by that very weariness helps to ensure sleep sufficient to restore; unless or until it causes exhaustion, it stimulates. The sense of responsibility in that week was great, but responsibility elevates when it does not crush. But when

the week was over, and the hope of peace was gone, the strain was felt more severely. Sunday brought no rest ; there was a Cabinet in the morning and another in the afternoon. When these were over, the discussions had become definite and taken shape enough for me to forecast the lines which a speech on behalf of the Government must take in the House of Commons on Monday afternoon. Sunday evening was spent arranging into notes the material of which my head was full. There was no time for verbal preparation ; all that could be done was to select and arrange what should be said, without much thought as to how it could be well or best said ; and to see that such documents or quotations as I wanted to read were ready. These, of course, the private secretaries got for me.

On Monday morning there was no time for further preparation : it was necessary to see the telegrams in case there was something urgent or new to be considered. Then there was another Cabinet. It was fully two o'clock before I got back from it to my room at the Foreign Office. There was barely an hour to go to Queen Anne's Gate, where I was staying, to get some food, which was then essential, and to be in the House of Commons by three o'clock, and in that interval to give what final thought was possible to the speech.

When I entered the room at the Foreign Office, a private secretary came in to tell me that the German Ambassador was waiting and most anxious to see me. It was hardly possible that he had come with anything from the German Government, for surely they had nothing more to say to us ; but if he had, it was my business to hear it, and essential for me to know what it was, before I spoke. Time must be made to see him. He came in, and his first words told me that he brought nothing from Berlin. He asked what had the Cabinet decided ? What was I going to say in the House of Commons ? Was it a declaration of war ? I answered that it was not a declaration of war, but a statement of conditions. He asked very earnestly what were the conditions. I would have told him personally anything, for no man had worked harder to avert war than Lichnowsky, or more genuinely hated this coming war ; but he was bound to telegraph whatever was said to Berlin, and the German Government, of all people, must not know an hour in advance of others abroad what was to be said. I replied that in an hour's time the whole world would know, and I could say nothing in advance. He asked, was the neutrality of Belgium one of the conditions ? I could only repeat that I could say nothing before I spoke. He then im-

plored that we should not make Belgian neutrality one of the conditions ; he knew nothing, he said, of the plans of the German General Staff : he could not suppose that a serious violation was one of them ; but it might be that it was part of the plan for German troops to go through one small corner perhaps of Belgium ; if so, they could not alter that now. I was sure what he said of his own want of knowledge of German military plans was true ; he, at least, was no party to the violation of Belgium ; but I could say nothing. There was no time to make any record of the conversation, and there is none but what is set down here. It was the last time that I saw him in the Foreign Office, and the vision of it is clear now—he standing in front of the door that he had entered, and I standing with him, hard-pressed for time, and ready to go out.

When I stood up to speak in the House of Commons I do not recall feeling nervous. At such a moment there could be neither hope of personal success nor fear of personal failure. In a great crisis, a man who has to act or speak stands bare and stripped of choice. He has to do what it is in him to do : just this is what he will and must do, and he can do no other.

As for the speech itself,¹ it was never revised,

¹ See Appendix D, Vol. III, p. 296.

and is on record as reported at the time, and must stand as it is ; but one or two things may be said here about it.

At first it was in my mind to read to the House Bethmann-Hollweg's bid for our neutrality, and the reply made to it ; but this was deliberately discarded. To read that would tend to stir indignation, and the House ought to come to its decisions on grounds of weight, not of passion. We were not to go into the war because Bethmann-Hollweg had made a dishonouring proposal to us. We should not be influenced by that in our decision. When the decision was made, then the communication with Bethmann-Hollweg should be published, and it would no doubt strengthen feeling ; but this ought to be later—after the decision, not before it. I was myself stirred with resentment and indignation at what seemed to me Germany's crime in precipitating the war, and all I knew of Prussian militarism was hateful ; but these must not be the motives of our going into the war. It was not on the case against Germany that our treasure was to be spent and British lives sacrificed in the war. These considerations worked in my mind by flashes of instinct in the pressure of those hours, rather than by calm proofs of reasoning ; but it was these considerations that decided the line of this speech. There

is in it a short and passing reference to the bid for our neutrality, but not made in a way to attract special attention or arouse feeling against Germany, and used only to enforce the argument about the importance of Belgium. Let anyone who is interested in pursuing this train of thought read first the White Paper, which, be it noted, contains all the material things that we knew then about events immediately preceding the outbreak of the war; then let him read the speech, and he will see how little use was made of documents that could have been used to prejudice opinion against Germany. The White Paper came, later, to justify the line we had taken, to show what we had done and what Germany and others had done; but it came to confirm a decision already taken, and to give information that Parliament and the country should have.

The real reason for going into the war was that, if we did not stand by France and stand up for Belgium against this aggression, we should be isolated, discredited, and hated; and there would be before us nothing but a miserable and ignoble future. The speech was directed to presenting this consideration in the way that would convince and make the strongest appeal to the House, and which was, in fact, the way this issue presented itself from the first to some of us, and in the

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end to all the Cabinet, except the two, John Morley and John Burns, who resigned. I never fully understood the reason of these resignations, and will therefore say only this about them—that we felt sure they were based on deep and sincere conviction, not on any pusillanimity or opportunism ; and we respected them accordingly.

One other point about the speech. It was felt to be essential to make clear to the House that its liberty of decision was not hampered by any engagements entered into previously without its knowledge. Whatever obligation there was to France arose from what those must feel who had welcomed, approved, sustained the Anglo-French friendship, that was open and known to all. In this connexion there was nothing to disclose except the engagement about the north and west coasts of France taken a few hours before, and the letters exchanged with Cambon in 1912, the letter that expressly stipulated that there was no engagement. It was not till 1923, nine years later, that a charge of having omitted the last sentence of that letter was brought to my notice. My first impulse was to deny the thing as impossible ; but it is so : the last sentence of the letter does not appear in the report of the speech.

A question, according to the report, was interjected about the date of the letter, and it

may be that the interruption in the reading of the letter, so near the end, caused an accidental omission, or perhaps I thought the last sentence unimportant, as it did not affect the sense and main purport of what had already been read out. I cannot say. The letter was published in full in the White Paper¹ two or three days later; the proof of that Paper was submitted to me before publication; I certainly did not raise any question of how the letter should appear in the White Paper, and so I must either have attached no importance to the omission of a sentence in the speech, or have been unconscious of there having been any omission.

Here, too, it must be said, in answer to another allegation, that this letter to Cambon, published in the White Paper, is the actual letter written in November 1912, and is given without omission or alteration of a word.

After the speech was over, but before the House rose, the following communication was brought to me; it had just been received from the Belgian Legation in London:

Germany sent yesterday evening at seven o'clock a note proposing to Belgium friendly neutrality,

¹ British Diplomatic Correspondence, No. 105; see Vol. I, pp. 168-169.

covering free passage on Belgian territory, and promising maintenance of independence of the kingdom and possession at the conclusion of peace; and threatening, in case of refusal, to treat Belgium as an enemy. A time limit of twelve hours was fixed for the reply. The Belgians have answered that an attack on their neutrality would be a flagrant violation of the rights of nations, and that to accept the German proposal would be to sacrifice the honour of a nation. Conscious of its duty, Belgium is firmly resolved to repel aggression by all possible means.

If this communication had been received before I went to the House it would, of course, have been read out as part of the speech; it would certainly have strengthened the statement very much, and would probably have shortened it by making unnecessary and eliminating some hypothetical circumlocution. As it was, it had to be read out afterwards and separately. When this was done, there can have been no doubt left in any mind that war was certain and inevitable.

An ultimatum was sent to Berlin requiring a satisfactory answer about Belgium on August 4, by midnight.

That evening some of us sat with the Prime Minister in the Cabinet Room in 10 Downing Street. I was there in touch with the Foreign Office to certify that no satisfactory reply had come from Berlin, though

this was, after all that had happened, a foregone conclusion and a matter of form. Churchill also was among those present, ready at the appointed hour to send out the war order that the fleet were expecting. Midnight came. We were at war.

CHAPTER XVIII

SOME REFLECTIONS

The Immensity of the War—The “Lamps going out”
—The Economic Disaster—Opinion in France, Russia,
and Germany—What the German Emperor wanted—The
Helplessness of German Civilians—The Deciding Power in
Germany—Calculations that miscarried—The German
Motive—Offensive or Defensive?—The Attitude of Austria.
—Qualifications of the Original Judgment—Could Great
Britain have stood aside?—The Probable Result, if she
had—The Conditional Obligation to France—Impossibility
of an Absolute Pledge—A Summary of Causes and Events.

THE endeavour of the two preceding chapters has been to give an account of what passed in the week preceding the war, so far as we knew it at the time; to give the sequence of events to the reader, as these presented themselves to me from July 25 to August 4, 1914; to tell the impressions made as they developed day by day and the thoughts to which they gave rise.

This chapter will be devoted to reviewing those impressions and those thoughts in the light of all that has happened and of what we know now; in other words, my object will be to write a chapter of history rather than narrative.

Let us examine the first of the four con-

siderations given in Chapter XVI,¹ as dominant in my mind in the last week of July 1914. This was, that a great European war would be a catastrophe on an unprecedented scale, and that this would be so obvious to all the Great Powers that, when on the edge of the abyss, they would call a halt and recoil from it. The first half of this impression unfortunately admits of no qualification now. We know the full tale of the loss of life, of the maiming and wounding ; we know this, but the amount of grief and suffering caused by it is more than human thought or sympathy can measure.

A friend came to see me on one of the evenings of the last week—he thinks it was on Monday, August 3. We were standing at a window of my room in the Foreign Office. It was getting dusk, and the lamps were being lit in the space below on which we were looking. My friend recalls that I remarked on this with the words : “ The lamps are going out all over Europe ; we shall not see them lit again in our life-time.”

The full extent of the economic disaster of the war is not yet known. Europe is still engaged in grappling with it ; we have certainly not yet seen the end of it ; it is possible that we have not yet seen the worst of it. Some of us thought that economic disaster

¹ See *supra*, p. 157.

would make itself felt more quickly after the outbreak of war; that it would rapidly become so acute as to bring war to an end. In that we were wrong, but we were wrong only in our estimate of the time and the manner in which economic disaster would make itself felt. It might have been more merciful to Europe as a whole, if this disaster had made itself felt more quickly and imperatively, and so had shortened the war. The longer the war went on the greater the magnitude of the economic disaster was sure to be, and the more prolonged and enduring would be the effects of it. Those who had the worst forebodings of what war would mean, did not over-estimate the human suffering or the economic distress that it has actually caused.

The war has also had a great effect on the old social and political order. In some countries it has destroyed it; in all European countries it has shaken it. The crust of the old order was wearing thin already. I felt that if war came the new forces pent within must break through. If war came, and proved to be the catastrophe that was anticipated, people would not stop to apportion war-guilt, to blame one country or to acquit another; they would take a wholesale view and say that, no matter who was to blame for this war, the system under which such a

catastrophe was possible must be changed. This feeling found expression in an interview I had with the Austrian Ambassador which is recorded in a later chapter,¹ and it was with me constantly at this time.

How much of this forecast has actually been verified? Six Great European Powers took part in the war. France is the only one of them of which it can be said that the social and political order has not been changed to an extent and degree that seemed almost impossible or incredible to us in 1914. Russia has had a revolution and is in a condition that seems to baffle description; Germany is a Republic; Italy has had a revolution sufficient to change her whole political system; and Austria-Hungary, as a Great Power, has disappeared. Britain has had a Labour Government, though, according to our precedents, we are making our revolution slowly and by constitutional methods.

Let us now examine the other half of this first consideration—the opinion that other European Governments would see the abyss and recoil from it. This unfortunately was wrong.

France, indeed, dreaded war, and did all she could to avoid it. French minds were probably more preoccupied with the awful peril of war to France than with the dread

¹ See Vol. III, p. 216.

of war as a general catastrophe. The immense growth and strength of Germany had smothered all French intention to attempt a *revanche*. The idea of recovering the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine had tacitly been dropped, though the French Government might not have dared to say in public that it had been for ever abandoned. The Franco-Russian Alliance did not contemplate or cover a French *revanche*. I once said to Metternich, when he was still German Ambassador in London, that though I had not seen or been told the terms of the Franco-Russian Alliance, I assumed that it did not cover a *revanche*. Metternich smiled grimly and said, "Yes; *we* know very well that it does not." France had no Ally but Russia on whom to count even for a war of defence and the Russian Army was an uncertain factor. It was certainly big, but it was sure to be slow, and France, therefore, in the event of war would feel the first terrific onset of an armed nation, nearly double that of France in numbers, with an army so highly trained and equipped that Germany had persuaded others, besides herself, that it was invincible. France, therefore, in these last critical days went to extreme limits to avoid giving provocation. She had the memory of 1870 and the apprehension of something much more formidable than 1870. When the shock of war

came she met it with all the desperate gallantry of a nation fighting for its life ; but she never sought war, and till the last moment strove to avoid it.

Of Russia one cannot speak as of one compact, sentient unit. The Tsar certainly desired peace. No one can doubt that his suggestion to the German Emperor for a settlement by use of the machinery of the Hague Tribunal was genuine, nor can the Russian mobilization be fairly construed as evidence of a desire for war. After the veto of a Conference, with Austria mobilized and Germany ready to strike, what counsellor could have honestly advised the Tsar that mobilization in Russia was a premature, unnecessary precaution ? That Russia felt that she would not submit a second time to a humiliation such as that of 1909, is probable. That the Tsar, or Sazonof, or anyone who had a decisive word in Russia was planning to provoke or to make war I do not believe. Perhaps it may be true to say, of Russia, that she was like a huge, unwieldy ship, which in time of agitation kept an uncertain course ; not because she was directed by malevolent intentions, but because the steering-gear was weak.

What about Germany ? Were the German people thirsting for war, or even consciously desiring it ? I do not suppose so.

But the outbreak of war was received in Germany with frantic demonstrations and enthusiasm. In Bismarck's time Germany had had three wars: the war against Denmark in 1864; against Austria in 1866; against France in 1870. All these wars had been short, had lasted only a few months, and had been completely successful, and out of them had come the German Empire. That Empire was now, after forty years of consolidation and growth, the most mighty Power actually, if not potentially, in the world. Was it to dread war? On the contrary, was it not possible that war might be another stage in its growth? We need not give too positive answers to these questions; but surely it is within the mark to say that there was not in Germany a dread of war or a repugnance to war strong enough to create a determined will to peace. If German opinion did not desire war, it was at least content to leave the conduct of affairs in the hands of the Emperor and the powers behind the throne, whoever they might be.

In fact, German and French people both thought of war, consciously or unconsciously, in 1914 in terms of the experience of people in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The French thought of it as the possible end of the history of France as a Great Power; to Germans it must have seemed a possible

step forward in the history of their Empire. We must therefore look for the real German policy and views elsewhere than in public opinion. What was the real policy that wielded German influence in the critical days before the war? We shall never know all, for, if there were persons in power who were bent on war, the record of their views and work will not be found in official documents. No revolution will unearth them; perhaps there are none. No account need be taken of the German Emperor; we know, from the Kautsky documents, the line that the Emperor took. He had told Tschirschky (the German Ambassador at Vienna) to stop talking what the Emperor called "nonsense": the "nonsense" being that Tschirschky had urged moderation on the Austrian Government after the murder of the Archduke; Tschirschky was reprimanded for this moderation, and the Austrian Ambassador at Berlin was told that he had been reprimanded. The authorities at Berlin did not always treat their Ambassadors with much consideration for their dignity or feelings, though foreigners were expected to show this deference, as Metternich once impressed upon me, when the London police had found some difficulty in getting way made for his carriage.

Then the German Emperor proceeded to encourage Austria against Serbia, not without

7 some contemptuous surprise that there should be so much spirit shown at Vienna. The language of his marginal notes, "Stamp upon this rabble," suggests a huntsman encouraging hounds to break up a fox. He was satisfied with the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia; he was also satisfied with the Serbian reply. "There is now no cause for war" was his marginal note on the reply. Austria had stamped; Serbia had grovelled; all the materials were now ready for staging another diplomatic triumph, with Germany as the brilliant second in shining armour. This was all that the German Emperor wanted, and, if matters had rested with him, there would have been no European war arising out of the Austro-Serbian dispute. But when Austria condemned the Serbian reply as unsatisfactory, the German Emperor did nothing; and after that he let the German and Austrian Governments veto a Conference to settle the one or two points that the Serbian reply had left outstanding; he made no response to the appeal of the Tsar to get the dispute referred to the Hague Tribunal; he let his own Government reply to the Russian mobilization, not with a counter mobilization of a similar character, but with an ultimatum that made war certain.

If we are to look for the real direction of German policy in the days preceding the war,

we must look elsewhere than to the man who wrote the marginal comments on the Kautsky documents. It is of no use to look to the action of Bethmann-Hollweg and Jagow—the men who, having nominal direction of German policy, folded their hands after the murder of the Archduke, and, according to their own account of the matter, never asked to see the terms of their Austrian Ally's ultimatum to Serbia before it was sent; the men who, after that ultimatum was sent and the Serbian reply received, expressed some criticism of the former and thought that the latter went further in the direction of conciliation than could have been expected; and who yet let things drift or spoke only in whispers at Vienna, when a decisive word was wanted. I believe that neither the Emperor nor Bethmann-Hollweg nor Jagow planned or desired war. But the Emperor, in the critical moment after the Serbian reply, apparently withheld his influence, when it might have been decisive for peace—a moral abdication that four years later led to the material abdication of his throne; and Bethmann-Hollweg and Jagow had no influence. It has been told me that in later years Jagow said of Bethmann-Hollweg and himself that, in the days before the war, they were “machtlos.” Whether Jagow said this or not, it is a true saying, and probably Beth-

mann-Hollweg and Jagow knew it all along to be true. They were powerless, and they were the only Germans with whom other Governments, including our own, could deal.

What deciding power was then in Germany? The one steady, constant, organized authority was the military one; and there can be little doubt that high military opinion held that war must come and that in 1914 the time for war had come. All preparations had been made for 1914; even in finance Germans had as far as possible got in what was owed to them, and arranged matters so that, when war came, they should owe and should not be owed money abroad. The capital levy had been made, the final and supreme effort to equip the Army. Some German naval opinion was adverse to war in 1914; but that was not on the ground that war was not to come: it was solely on the ground that in two or three years more the German Fleet would be more powerful.¹ The only difference between military and naval author-

¹ See evidence of Admiral Koch before the Second Subcommittee of the Committee appointed by the National Constituent Assembly to enquire into the responsibility for the war: "We hoped to be able to delay the war for a few years in order to have the battle fleet of quite different dimensions—that is, different in the way of numbers, so that we should then have been in a position ourselves to see a decision off the enemy's coasts. Unfortunately the war overtook us." (*Official German Documents*, Carnegie Endowment Translation, vol. i, p. 532.)

ities was as to the year when war should be made ; there was no difference in the opinion that war would have to be made. The military authorities settled it. The operation against France would work according to plan, as in 1870 ; all the more certainly, perhaps, because this time the plan included an attack through Belgium, and therefore in the more overwhelming strength for which the wider front provided by the inclusion of Belgium gave fuller opportunity. If the British Expeditionary Force were sent, it would be too small to make a difference to the result. (It is known, now, that on the outbreak of war the German military authorities told the Navy not to make an effort to prevent the British Army from landing in France, because, if it did land, the German Army could deal with it.)¹ In a few weeks not only would Paris fall, but the French armies would be defeated and out of action. France would then be held with comparative ease, and the whole German Army might be turned against Russia. In a few months Russia would tire of defeat and loss with no prospect of success. All this would be accomplished before British naval pressure could have time to tell upon Germany, who would then be supreme over all the Continent of Europe and Asia Minor,

¹ See Von Tirpitz, *My Memories*, vol. ii, p. 290, English translation.

for the Turk would be with a victorious Germany.

There is nothing fantastic in attributing such plans to German military authority—they very nearly succeeded; according to German calculations they must have been bound to succeed. The examination of the error in these calculations, which German eyes could not see, must be reserved for another chapter on the war. There seems to be no doubt that there was a military party in Germany that had decided for war in 1914 (though German diplomacy was expected to do what it could to make it appear that the war-guilt was with someone else) and that no such settlement as in the year of Agadir would have been permitted. This crisis was to be forced to the point of war. If France abandoned Russia and offered to remain neutral, that was not to suffice; France was to be required to cede, as pledges of neutrality, the two fortresses of Toul and Verdun. There was to be no escape from humiliation, not even by neutrality.

The judgment to be passed upon all this is not a very simple matter. The German military view, assuming it to be as stated, may have one or the other of two aspects; and the historian's judgment of it will depend upon which of these aspects it is that he selects as the true one. They shall both be stated here.

The first is that Germany was deliberately aiming at world predominance. For this purpose, not content with the greatest Army the world had ever seen, she was building a big Navy as well. Her object was first the hegemony of the Continent and then predominance over Britain. Passages from the German Emperor's speeches could easily be used to show that he believed the Germans to be a chosen people, and that belief lends to the assumption that other nations have no virtues, no rights; that the interest of the chosen people is the only test of right and wrong; and it causes a general hypertrophy of patriotism. The danger of this is expressed in Latin in three words, *corruptio optimi pessima*; the saying applies to all the best things in human life—to religion, to art, to music—and patriotism is no exception to the application of it. But it is not fair to take the Emperor as typical of anything; he was *sui generis*. It will be enough to sum up this aspect by saying that many persons in Britain thought, and still think, that Germans felt German *Kultur* to be a superior thing that ought to dominate the world; that they did not believe in "live and let live" or in equality: and that, to come to the concrete and particular, they considered that there was not room in the world for both the British and German Empires. It is not

surprising if this was a dominant notion in Germany. Most nations think better of themselves than of others, but when this opinion takes the form of an attempt at world power, other nations are justified in regarding it as an aggression, and in saying that, if the aggressor fails, he richly deserves his fate.

The other aspect in which German action may be viewed requires a different judgment. In this aspect German militarism would still seem to have made the war in 1914, but its case for doing so would be stated thus. Europe had become an armed camp. The burden of armaments was becoming an intolerable strain, which must end in war. And did not the piling up of armaments imply that force was the only thing that counted among nations? War was therefore inevitable. It was not reasonable that Germany, who was at the height of her military power, with her maximum of men and equipment and perfection of strategic railways to the frontiers of other countries, should wait till her neighbours, more particularly Russia, had increased the size and efficiency of their armies and perfected their strategic railways. If war really was inevitable surely a patriotic German was entitled to choose for war the year and the moment that best suited Germany. This case, in short, for making war is, as Germans

themselves put it, that it was an offensive-defensive war.

The first comment on this aspect of German militarism is that it was Germany, more than any other nation, who had forced the pace in armaments, first in armies and then in navies. If war were really inevitable, it was Germany who had the largest share of responsibility for producing the state of affairs that made war inevitable. It was Germany who had been most quick to oppose suggestions for agreements to arrest the growth of armaments; who had resented as unfriendly, if not aggressive towards herself, the very harmless tentative of Campbell-Bannerman in *The Nation* article of 1907, and had blocked every movement in that direction, down to the Churchill proposal for a naval holiday in 1913. If military preparation and strategic railways in France or Russia were to be regarded as justification for Germany to make war, then the corresponding preparations in Germany were at least an equal justification to any other nation, for in every way German preparations and armament had been ahead of those of other nations.

There is another comment to be made. To make war, until it is impossible to avoid it, is a crime. Is it justifiable or wise to precipitate a crime, because one thinks that someone else will sooner or later commit it? The

answer to this question would need a discussion on belief or disbelief in Divine superintendence and the reign of Moral Law in human affairs; this would be too great a digression here. The conclusion of this argument shall be brought within very comprehensible limits by stating its minimum. Those who argue that German militarism was justified by militarism in her neighbours must in fairness at least admit that militarism in Russia or elsewhere was justified by militarism in Germany.

The estimate formed at the time, 1914, of the attitude of Austria must be qualified. This estimate was that Austria simply and foolishly hoped for a triumph over Serbia without the danger of war with Russia; that, when she found this to be a miscalculation, she tried to get out of it by diplomatic settlement with Russia direct; but found it was too late. Her Ally, Germany, had gone to war with Russia and dragged Austria in. If this view is put to a German I am told the answer is that Austria's delay in going to war with Russia was a pose, intended to clear Austria, even at the expense of Germany, of responsibility for war. The truth probably is, that there were sinister and reckless influences in Austria. The persons and forces that moved in the Friedjung and the Agram trials and made use there of forged documents

were still in existence ; and they were capable of any crime and any blunder. In Austria, as in Russia, there was no head with direction and grip of affairs.

The upshot of all this is, that on the Continent all the Great Powers most concerned in this crisis were thinking of war in terms of previous experience, and of the latter half of the nineteenth century. We were alone in foreboding that war in the twentieth century would be unlike anything that had preceded it. The abyss was not generally seen even when Governments came to the edge of it. Could more have been done to make them see it ? I think not. When once we were in the diplomatic crisis we were so occupied in searching for practical expedients for solution that there was no time for abstract argument about the catastrophe of modern war. In a crisis people cannot change their settled points of view on general matters ; they are too busy with particulars of the moment. Predictions that war would bring a general social upheaval fell flat. Even now, with all the experience of the war behind us, it is doubtful whether Europe is penetrated with a sense that war must be prevented in future, and that this must be the common purpose of all nations. Europe was not ready before the war for such an appeal against war ; it is not certain that Europe is ready yet to

respond whole-heartedly and effectively to such an appeal.

Little more need be said of the assumption (No. 2 in Chapter XVI¹) that Germany counted for everything in the crisis, and that it was only with her we had to deal. It is clear that it was not the case that Bethmann-Hollweg could control the Austrian Government, and apparently he did more than we knew at the time to recommend a Conference or some form of mediation; but if his was not the decisive word at Berlin, it could not be so at Vienna. But it would have made no difference if we had dealt at Vienna as strenuously as at Berlin. We could have dealt only with Berchtold, the Minister for Foreign Affairs at Vienna, and he seems not to have counted at all. The military elements in Austria-Hungary had been set in their course by encouragement to take a stiff line with Serbia. Nothing but a decisive word from military elements in Berlin would have pulled them up; they would have paid no attention to anything said from London.

The statement (No. 3 in Chapter XVI²) that if war came we ought to stand by France must next be reviewed. Any reader of Chapter XVI may reasonably find the following question suggested to him by what is written. Ought not anyone, who thought

¹ See *supra*, p. 157.

² See *supra*, p. 158.

that European war must be such a huge catastrophe, have determined to keep Britain out of it? One answer is, that a large part of the Cabinet did so resolve, and the narrative has shown how impossible it was for them to keep that resolution. But this does not explain the position of those who, seeing modern war as a great catastrophe, yet held, even before the invasion of Belgium, that British interests would require us to go into war, if war there must be, on the side of France.

The rightness of this opinion will best be made apparent by examining an opinion expressed the other day in a political speech at home. I forget who the speaker was, but his opinion was to the effect that if, in 1914, we could have known all that the war would mean, no member of the Government would have agreed to go into it. This statement, final as it sounds, is not the end of thought: it makes one begin to think. It is a commonplace of conversation that, if we had kept out at the beginning, we should have been drawn in later on. I remember once saying to a friend that, if we had not gone into the war, France must have been beaten, for the Germans would have declared steel contraband of war and with their powerful fleet have cut off from France the supply of foreign, including British, steel, which soon became

essential to enable France to carry on the war. "That," said my friend, "would of course have brought us in." That particular instance may seem too narrow a ground on which to base so great a conclusion. Then let us take a broader consideration. The United States were removed from the scene of war by 3,000 miles of ocean—an ocean from which the Middle West and West, the majority of their population, were remote, some by hundreds, and some even by thousands of miles. The political interests of the United States were not menaced: at the outset the sympathies of the people were divided, where these were not indifferent to European war altogether. As neutrals they throve in some branches of commerce; materially they had something to lose and nothing to gain by departing from neutrality and entering the war. Yet they came in. It is out of all reason to believe that the forces which moved so great a nation, from such a distance, to enter the war would not have compelled Britain to take part in it too. No ocean separated us from it; our shore was within sound of the guns; our world position was bound to be affected by the result of the war. To anyone who thinks that we might have stood aside at the first, but must have come in later, there is one simple reply. If we were to come in at all, let us be thankful

that we did it at once—it was better so, better for our good name, better for a favourable result, than if we had first tried to keep out and then found ourselves impelled or compelled to go in.

The only position to be examined at more length is that of those who, pacifist in 1914, or who have become pacifist since by contemplation of the ruin of war, hold that we could have kept out of the war for good and all, and that we ought to have done so. This opinion must be based on the premise that a great country, though part of a militarist continent, can escape the effects of militarism by refusing to fight; that it can, as far as its own welfare is concerned, limit the consequences of a great war by refusing to take part in it. This premise, as applied to the war of 1914, is not sound. The result of taking part in the war is known; it entailed immense loss and suffering, but it does not therefore follow that we should have avoided it or could have done so. Have those who think we should have kept out of the war drawn any clear picture in their thought of what would have happened if we had stood aside in 1914? They give no sign that they have thought of this at all. Let us think it out as well as we can. What would have happened?

Paris would have been taken according to

the German calculation. Paris very nearly was taken ; there was nothing to spare. If there had been lacking anything, French or British, that was used to stop the retreat and accomplish the battle of the Marne, the Germans would have reached Paris ; the absence of the British Expeditionary Force would have made a difference that would have been fatal. How long France would have been able to hold out after Paris fell is matter for military conjecture. Her Fleet having to contain the Austrian Fleet in the Mediterranean could not have kept the Atlantic and Channel sea communications open. France would have been cut off from foreign supplies of iron and coal, of which some of her own most valuable supplies would have been in German hands, as indeed they actually were even after the battle of the Marne. The end was certain. Huge defeats of Russian armies would have followed ; and, with no prospect of recovery in France, those elements in Russia that were always susceptible to German influence would have asserted themselves. Russia would have made peace probably in no very long time ; especially if Germany, having gained the day, had been wise enough to make the terms appear easy. Then Germany would have been supreme on the Continent. Belgium would have been under her heel. The fear of the

fate of Belgium would have been before the eyes of every neutral State ; the position of Italy, who had refused to join the other two members of the Triple Alliance in the war, would not have been pleasant.

Consider what the position of Britain would have been. We should have been isolated ; we should have had no friend in the world ; no one would have hoped or feared anything from us, or thought our friendship worth having.

We should have been discredited, should have been held to have played an inglorious and ignoble part. Even in the United States we should have suffered in good opinion. Those Americans who were outspokenly pro-Ally and who wanted the United States to join the Allies at once or much earlier than their own country eventually did, would have despised us. We should have lost what pro-British sympathy there was in the United States, and we should have gained nothing there : the feeling that was indifferent about us would have remained indifferent ; the feeling that was anti-British would have been anti-British still. Every neutral country would have held that we had turned our back on a clear obligation to Belgium and done this in spite of the Belgian appeal and of the fight she herself was making against overwhelming odds.

We should have been hated. Even after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 we incurred much odium for having stood aside. I think the odium was then quite unreasonable, but the *tertius gaudens* is always hated. Our intense unpopularity on the Continent at some previous times has been due largely to the opinion that we were always taking a hand and never taking a side. In those days we had boasted of a "splendid isolation"—in other words, of having no friend. Of late years we had found the position of having no friend to be unsafe; we had made friends. If we had stood aside now, we should again have had no friends. France and Russia would not have loved Germany after the war, but in one thing they would have been ready to join with her, and this would have been in a policy directed against Britain, who had stood aside while they suffered. In Germany militarism and navalism would have been supreme. The Socialism in Germany of which we heard so much, counted for nothing on the outbreak of war. For a time, after a triumphant war, it must have been still more subordinate; if it had become troublesome, its energies would have been turned into patriotic channels once more, this time in war against Britain. And that war we should certainly have had to face. Germany would have

wielded the whole diplomatic strength of the Continent. For a time we might have struggled on ingloriously, squeezed and thwarted everywhere. There would have been weakness, moreover, inside the Empire. What the Dominions would have thought I do not venture to say, but quite a substantial section of British opinion would have regarded with shame the conduct of this country in standing aside; some of our self-respect would have gone. Finally, when the German Fleet was ready, war would have been forced on us, and we should have been found dispirited, half beaten before the war began. By that time the full range of the big gun, the extended use of the submarine, would have been known; the French shores would have been in unfriendly hands, and the Channel would have been closed to us. Can anyone say that this picture is remote from probability? If anyone thinks so, let him read the second edition of von Bülow's book ¹ and the *Memoirs and Letters of von Kiderlen Waechter*, and consider German feeling and the part played by German militarism in policy before the war. Then let him picture to himself faithfully what German militarism and its policy would have meant for us after

¹ *Imperial Germany*, by Prince Bernard von Bülow. (English translation, with a Foreword by J. W. Headlam. New and revised edition, November 1916. Cassell & Co.)

a war from which Germany had emerged supreme.

It is not the intention to suggest that all that is set down in this chapter was in our minds in the week before the war—some of it was, some of it was not. The two preceding chapters tell what I thought in 1914, and how we came to act as we did. We did not then believe war to be inevitable. We had no thought ourselves of going into war in 1914 because we supposed that sooner or later we should have to fight. We just strove to prevent war happening at all. But when, in spite of our efforts, war came, it is well that we took our place in it and at the outset. The latent forces at work became apparent as the war proceeded, and the incidents in which the war originated were forgotten as these forces were revealed. It was a great struggle between the *Kultur* that stood for militarism and the free unmilitarist democratic ideal. It was the perception of this, whether consciously or unconsciously, that brought the United States into the war—the United States, which as a whole had cared little about the incidents that caused the war at the outset, and which did not as a whole then perceive it. But it was the perception of it, revealed to us as the war developed, that made us know that we were fighting for the very life of what Britain and the self-

governing Dominions cared for. We could not have escaped that struggle between militarism and democracy by turning our backs upon the war in August 1914. The thing would have pursued us until we had to turn and face it, and that would have been when it was even stronger and when we had become weak and isolated. We suffered grievously, most grievously after going into the war in 1914, but we came out of it honourably and with our country safe; if we had not gone into the war in 1914 we should have had later, and perhaps not so very much later, to undergo suffering at least as great, and we should have perished ignobly.

One other picture may be suggested. After a German triumph on the Continent, accomplished rapidly, while Great Britain and America stood aside, the people of the United States might have perceived what the inevitable issue was, and, when the struggle was renewed, might have made common cause with us; and so militarism might have been defeated. I will not attempt to trace to their probable conclusions all the hypotheses that this picture suggests. Such a course would certainly have been less honourable for us. If anyone is inclined to prefer it, he can ask Americans whether they think that this would have been the actual sequel; and

whether they would have preferred it to what they and we actually did.

The consideration (No. 4 in Chapter XVI¹) that no pledge must be given to France and Russia which Parliament and the country might not fulfil has been fully explained. There is no qualification to be made of what has been said about it. The pledge simply could not have been given sooner than it was. To give it on my own initiative, without consulting the Cabinet, was, of course, out of the question. To do so would have been criminal, for such a pledge would have been worthless. The Cabinet, in the earlier days, was not prepared to give such a pledge, and, with the existing state of feeling in Parliament and the country, it was not in a position to give it. The French appeal for help was brought before the Cabinet ; if any of us had pressed for a pledge to be given in the earlier days of that week, we should have divided the Cabinet. The Cabinet, in such a grave matter, stood in a similar position to the House of Commons as that in which the Secretary of State stood to the Cabinet. If this Cabinet, in the earlier days, had asked Parliament to ratify such a pledge, it would have divided the House of Commons and the country. The violation of Belgium, when it came, would have found us with a divided

¹ See *supra*, p. 158.

Cabinet, possibly with one Government resigned and another not formed ; with a House of Commons and a country paralysed by division of opinion, with one section vehemently committed to helping France and another section, with equal vehemence, opposed to taking any part in war. Looking back on it all, it seems to me that the course actually followed in those critical days was the only one that could have led to the entry of Britain into the war, immediately, wholeheartedly and with practical unanimity. This was the actual result. It was a result that had seemed exceedingly doubtful when the crisis first began.

As the giving of a pledge in the earlier days was impossible, it is hardly worth while to consider whether, if it had been possible, the giving of a pledge to France and Russia, and the intimation to Germany, that it had been given, would have prevented war. I feel sure that it would not, though I am aware that there is much British and French opinion to the contrary.

The military authorities in Germany had made up their minds that the entry of Britain into the war would not make their plans miscarry. Their military plans, they thought, would succeed before the pressure of the British Army would have had time to tell. For this reason naval authorities who, like

Admiral Tirpitz, wished political crises to be avoided until the German Fleet was stronger, were either overruled or not consulted. So little did the German military authorities consider that the landing of the British Expeditionary Force in France would upset their advance on Paris, that the Navy was apparently told that it need not attempt to prevent the landing.

Germany would naturally have preferred that we should not come in ; to keep us out, she was ready to promise anything that would not interfere with her military operations (such as not to attack the north and west coasts of France), but her military authorities considered that our entry into the war would not make any difference to the success of their advance on Paris. After the capture of Paris the Channel ports must fall into German hands, and what further use would the British Expeditionary Force have been to France after that ? They underrated the value of our Expeditionary Force.

Before the war the German Military Attaché in London told Haldane that he kept reporting to Berlin that the British Expeditionary Force, though, from a continental point of view, absurdly small in numbers, was in quality the finest thing in the world, " and," he added, " they won't believe me."

Everything we know goes to prove that the

German military authorities calculated on a war, not of years but of months, during which they would not be seriously hurt by anything the British Army could do; that they thought they would deal easily with the British Expeditionary Force if it came: in other words, that their plans covered the risk of Britain coming in, and that they were prepared and had made up their minds to take that risk.

If this were so, an early intimation that we should join France and Russia would not have prevented war; it would have led to an outburst of German propaganda, and to the cry that British hostility had at this last moment made war inevitable by stiffening the backs of France and Russia. It would have been said that our entry had incited France and Russia to attack Germany.

Here it may be well to summarize the course that policy took so far as I was concerned. I entered the Foreign Office in 1892 without experience and without preconceived ideas of policy. I was content to follow first Rosebery and then Kimberley in what was done in the Foreign Office. I left it in 1895 full of discontent and apprehension, feeling that we were dependent on Germany and yet had not Germany's good-will, and that we were drifting towards war with France or Russia or with both. What happened after I left

office deepened that feeling. Friction with France or with Russia continued over incidents that would never have occurred or would never have been dangerous but for the jealousy and mistrust on their side and on ours. The impression of German ill-will towards us was confirmed by manifestations of it, as in the telegram to Krüger and in the South African War. We could understand the ill-will of France and Russia; we had more than once thwarted Russian access to an open port; France was sensitive about our occupation of Egypt, and we were often in conflict with her. But why did Germany dislike us in those days? Then came the Agreement with France in 1904, and I welcomed it as the end of quarrelling and the removal of one real danger of war. There was nothing but this in my mind when both the front opposition bench and I welcomed the Agreement in the House of Commons, and a reading of the speech I then made will bear this out.¹

I entered the Foreign Office again in December 1905 with a fixed resolve not to lose the one friendship that we had made, not to slip back again into the frictions of 1892-5; the sense of discomfort and danger that I had felt then was so clearly remembered. But I found this friendship in peril:

¹ See Appendix B, Vol. III, p. 278.

France had been menaced in 1905, forced to dismiss Delcassé, and to agree to the Algeciras Conference. This Conference was approaching, and the new friendship had to be tested there. It would be either broken or confirmed. I was resolved that if possible it should not be broken, and it emerged from the Conference stronger than before. That had been no part of my design when I took office; German pressure forced it in 1906 and forced it again in 1911.

In making the Agreement with Russia there was no thought but to do what had been done with France—remove friction and mistrust. There was never any thought of giving our relations with France and Russia an aggressive turn against Germany. Support was indeed given to France at Algeciras and over Agadir, as the 1904 Agreement openly bound us to do, and diplomatic relations with France and Russia were always close and friendly; but on no question was our influence ever used to make mischief for the Triple Alliance, and where we could, as in the friction between Austria and Russia after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, we worked hard to make things better.

With Germany I wanted to be as friendly as I could be without sacrificing friendships already made; as I said in the House of Commons at least once, if not oftener, I was

willing to make a new friend, wherever it could be done, without losing an old one. The agreements, which were initialled, about the Portuguese Colonies and Bagdad Railway, and which I was ready to sign, are an instance of this ; but on the thing that mattered most, on the navies, we could come to no agreement ; and it was not our fault. I accepted the Triple Alliance and made no attempt, however covert, to weaken it. My object was indeed to preserve the Entente, for British interests, I thought, required this ; but the intention and hope were that the Entente and the Triple Alliance might go on side by side and preserve peace by settling diplomatically each difficulty as it arose. The London Conference over Balkan troubles confirmed this hope, but in 1914 this intention was defeated and the hope destroyed.

Anyone who has taken an important part in public affairs, looking backward after it is over, may be amazed to see how far the results of what he did differ from what he intended them to be. He may well feel, as he reflects upon this, that he has been but an instrument for purposes of which he did not think at the time, and which are beyond his power to comprehend or fathom.

What was directly due, in some measure at any rate, to my presence at the Foreign Office was :

1. That the Government and the country were not divided, as they would have been divided, if an aggressive or pronounced anti-German policy had been adopted and pursued ; and

2. That close touch with France and Russia, especially with France, was preserved for nine years, as it would not have been, unless there had been someone at the Foreign Office with a constant resolve and care to keep it ; and so war was at least deferred till we were better placed to bear it.

Our coming into the war at once, and united, was due to the invasion of Belgium. That was done by the Germans.

The fact that when we intervened we could do so with any timely effect was due to our having an Expeditionary Force ready and equipped to go abroad at a moment's notice. This was due to Haldane.

The part played by Asquith, as Prime Minister, was of supreme importance ; on this all the efforts of individual Ministers depended for their effect. That is dealt with in a subsequent chapter.¹ Subject to this, it may fairly be said that the Germans, Haldane, and myself were the agencies most directly used to bring about the united, immediate, and effective entry of Britain into war ; but this was not what any of us

¹ See Vol. III, pp. 225-227.

had desired. Haldane and I had not wanted war, and the Germans had not wanted us to be in it.

The tragedy was great, but it was for Britain the least of the immense perils with which the time was fraught.

CHAPTER XIX

COULD WAR HAVE BEEN PREVENTED ?

Difficulty of Dealing with Germany—Absence of Goodwill—Persistence of Naval Competition—Imputation of Hidden Motives—The Atmosphere of Militarism—The Vicious Circle of Armaments—Creating Fear—If Great Britain had adopted Conscription—A Certain Result—A Personal Matter—Failing Eyesight.

AFTER the outbreak of war I sometimes lay awake asking myself again and again whether the war could have been prevented by anything that I could have done in the preceding years. Sleep came every night sufficient in amount to restore strength for the next day, but there was often a wakeful time round about four o'clock in the morning—that time when vitality is low and spirits are depressed and the mind is often a prey to doubts and anxieties. I would try one hypothesis after another, considering what hope there would have been in any of them. The one that I dwelt upon most was this. Suppose that, after the London Conference of 1912-13, I had gone to Berlin ; had there pointed to the success of the Conference in tiding over a European crisis ; had urged upon the Germans the value, even the

necessity, of a general agreement between the Triple Alliance and the Entente to put the same Conference machinery in motion and use it directly a new crisis came ! Suppose I had done this, would the appeal have been successful ? Would the Germans have understood it ? Could they have been trusted to use it fairly, or would some twist have been given to the overture representing it as a change of policy towards detachment from France and Russia ? The answer I gave myself was never hopeful. What we know now shows how insuperable were the difficulties of satisfactory dealings with the German Government.

First, there was no good-will towards England in Germany. We felt this all along, but the ill-will was even stronger than we realized. Consider the revelation of it in Bülow's Memorandum, written when he was on a visit to England in 1899. A translation was published in *The Times* of June 28, 1924. Here is the concluding passage of it :

On the whole, it is certain that opinion in England is far less anti-German than opinion in Germany is anti-English ; therefore those Englishmen like Chirol and Saunders (the Berlin Correspondent of *The Times*) are the most dangerous for us, since they know from their own observations the depth and bitterness of German antipathy against England.

The influence of men like Chirol and Saunders did indeed affect English opinion, but it was discounted by many people as being inspired by prejudice. We now know that the line they took sprang from knowledge. Sir Valentine Chirol still lives to appreciate the compliment Count Bülow paid him, and to enjoy our esteem ; but a good many of his countrymen owe some apology to the memory of Mr. George Saunders for having underrated his sincerity and his knowledge.

Some German civilians in high places did not share this anti-English feeling ; they saw that the growth of German naval competition must prevent a *rapprochement* and eventually imperil good relations between Britain and Germany. For that reason they deplored the German naval policy, and some of them tried to arrest it ; but they were always overborne by the naval or military element. The fact is, that in dealing with Chancellors and Secretaries for Foreign Affairs at Berlin, we could make no progress, because we were not dealing with the men who really directed policy. The last and decisive word was with some military or naval person.

A summary of the *Memoirs* of Kiderlen Waechter, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at Berlin in 1912, was published in *The Times* of July 3, 1924. It shows clearly how the civilians, even when they held a

strong and definite view, could not carry a policy. Kiderlen Waechter was no sentimental pacifist, but we learn from his narrative how opposed he was to the prevailing naval policy, how powerless the civilian was, and how the Emperor sided with Admiral von Tirpitz. The civilians were quite right in their estimate of the barrier that the growth of German naval power must be to cordial relations. It forced our hands here : we had to build ships to meet it, and to tell Parliament frankly that we were doing this and why we were doing it. The Germans went on saying that their ship-building had no relation to ours ; but this did not lessen distrust, and we know now (if we did not know then) that it was not true. Our offers to come to an agreement to stop naval competition came to nothing. Memoirs like those of Kiderlen Waechter explain why they failed. We may wonder now whether our offers to limit naval expenditure were not taken by men like Tirpitz as signs of weariness on our part ; if so, these offers may have encouraged the hope of overtaking us and so have positively increased the competition.

Another difficulty was the inveterate tendency in Berlin to invent some hidden motive for whatever a British Government did. The ostensible motive was assumed not to be the real one ; therefore some other had to be

looked for, imagined, and supposed to be found. An appalling instance of this is revealed in the German Official Documents recently published.

In 1895 Lord Salisbury was so shocked by the Armenian massacres that he doubted whether Turkey must not break up. He spoke to the German Ambassador in London about it. Count Hatzfeldt recommended that his Government should enter into the discussion desired by Lord Salisbury, for, he said : " Lord Salisbury had spoken with the same confidence and frankness as in former days." This was what Holstein, the very able if not the directing mind of the Foreign Office at Berlin, wrote upon the proposal :

All the proposals of the English Minister, in my opinion, have no object except to alleviate the uncomfortable position in which England at the moment finds herself with regard to the French and Russians on account of Egypt, by creating complications in Asia Minor and the Balkans in which all the Continental Powers, even ourselves, would be entangled sooner than England.¹

Bülow wrote, in the memorandum quoted above, that, according to German ideas, English politicians were somewhat naïve. Amongst other characteristics that he remarked in them he notes, " They find it

¹ *Die Grosse Politik*, 1871-1914, vol. x, p. 19.

difficult to credit really bad intentions in others." German officials erred in the other direction, that of being too prone to credit others with really bad intentions.

These were the conditions that made it impossible for British and German minds to have real contact. We were thinking of an agreement to restrain the increasing burden of naval competition ; Germany was thinking of some agreement to ensure that Britain should be neutral, if or when a great European war came. The only thing that would have been worth talking about was an agreement to work together to make war in Europe impossible. If Germany had made a fresh appeal to us for such an agreement, there would have been a great response from public opinion, qualified by very strong opposition from those who would have seen in the German overture a design to separate us from France and Russia, to isolate us and make us dependent again, as before 1904, on Germany.

Such an appeal was never made, and it is not worth while to ask whether, if made to us, we should have trusted it or should have accepted it. Had we made it to Berlin and had it resulted in a conference between the Triple Alliance and Entente, it would have come to nothing. There would have been the usual manœuvring for position and for

special advantages, and the notion of a great agreement to maintain peace would have perished, frost-bitten to death in the atmosphere of militarism. The only sound basis for such an agreement would have been a sense in the Great Powers that the common interest of all of them in peace was so great as to transcend the special interests of each, and a belief on the part of each that the other Powers felt this and could be trusted. Militarism did not believe this. It held the contrary view—that the opposing interests of nations are the dominant factors, and that their tendency to attack each other can only be kept in bounds by armaments; that peace can be secured not by justice, not by desire for it, not by agreements, but only by armed force.

If a great peace proposal had been made to Germany and she had opened her heart in replying to it, her answer surely must have been on these lines. For she was the centre of a militarist Continent, and was herself the very centre and admired pattern of that militarism by which the Continent was dominated.

More than one true thing may be said about the causes of the war, but the statement that comprises most truth is that militarism and the armaments inseparable from it made war inevitable. Armaments were

intended to produce a sense of security in each nation—that was the justification put forward in defence of them. What they really did was to produce fear in everybody. Fear causes suspicion and hatred ; it is hardly too much to say that, between nations, it stimulates all that is bad and depresses all that is good.

One nation increases its Army and makes strategic railways towards the frontiers of neighbouring countries. The second nation makes counter-strategic railways and increases its army in reply. The first nation says this is very unreasonable, because its own military preparations were only precautions ; the second nation says that its preparations also were only precautions, and points out, with some cogency, that the first nation began the competition ; and so it goes on, till the whole Continent is an armed camp covered by strategic railways.

After 1870 Germany had no reason to be afraid, but she fortified herself with armaments and the Triple Alliance in order that she might never have reason to be afraid in future. France naturally was afraid after 1870, and she made her military preparations and the Dual Alliance (with Russia). Britain, with a very small Army and a very large Empire, became first uncomfortable and then (particularly when Germany began a big-fleet

programme) afraid of isolation. She made the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, made up her quarrels with France and Russia, and entered into the Entente. Finally Germany became afraid that she would presently be afraid, and struck the blow, while she believed her power to be still invincible. Heaven alone knows the whole truth about human affairs, but I believe the above sketch to be as near to a true statement of the causes of war as an ordinary intelligence can get in a few sentences.

If it be so, it is a complete answer to those who say that if we had adopted conscription and built up a big Army we should have prevented the war. We should not thereby have prevented the war ; we should have precipitated it sooner.

Let anyone who doubts this imagine himself a member of the Government formed in 1905. He first divines for himself that there will eventually be a European war precipitated by Germany and that Britain must at once prepare for it. No one in the Cabinet, and not many people outside it, share this opinion. He sets to work to convince his colleagues that Britain must adopt conscription and that an Expeditionary Force of at least 500,000 men with the appropriate equipment and reserves is necessary. Let us assume (though it was in fact impossible) that he

succeeds in convincing the Cabinet and that they coax the House of Commons to vote any Estimates rising to at least £100,000,000 a year, that is, more than double what the House did actually vote. Let us assume (though this, too, would have been impossible) that the Government succeeds in getting a majority to vote these Estimates ; it will only succeed in doing that by explaining very clearly why the huge estimates and this large force are required. It will not be enough to say vaguely that European armaments are such as to make war probable if not inevitable ; the Government will have to tell the whole truth, for on less than that they cannot justify this enormous increase of Army Estimates. They will have to explain that a large British Army is needed as counterpoise to the German Army ; that it is for the contingency of war with Germany that we are preparing.

This large Army will not be built up in a year. There will have to be a year of beginning and several years of making. Year by year the Army Estimates will have to be larger and larger ; there will be protests from the section in the country that does not believe in the German peril and from the still larger section which thinks we should keep out of a continental war, even if it does come. This latter section will feel their sentiment

reinforced by the burden of Army expenditure. Year by year, to overcome opposition to the growing Army Estimates, the Government will have to be more and more explicit in explaining that German armaments and policy make this large Army necessary, more and more emphatic in asserting the reality of a German peril. Does anybody imagine that year by year, with all this going on, Germany is going to sit passive, to watch it all, to wait till Britain has really got the Army big enough to make the defeat of Germany certain ? The Germans were not so pacifist as that ; they looked like striking at France in 1905, and again in 1911. They would surely have struck long before we had built up our Army on the continental scale, avowedly, as it must have been, for the contingency of defeating the German Army, and defeating it in co-operation with the French or the French and Russian Armies. For this prospect must have formed part of the avowed justification for Army Expenditure. An Expeditionary Force even of 500,000 men would have been of little use on the Continent by itself. It could be effective only as part of a great combination. Nobody can seriously maintain that Germany would have waited till such a British Army was ready. Those who maintain that Germany chose the time and struck the blow in 1914 must be the

first to see that she would have regarded great military preparations in Britain as a justification and imperative reason for striking sooner.

A change of our army system to conscription would have involved a transition stage that would have offered a moment peculiarly favourable to Germany. A scheme was actually considered in the War Office by high military authority in the years before the war. It was put aside as futile because no political party was prepared to consider it, because the country would not have conscription ; but it was not considered in principle to be impossible.

Some 200,000 men could have been conscripted each year for two years' service followed by ten years in the Reserve ; this would have been combined with a voluntary army of the smaller size required for service in India or elsewhere in the Empire as at present.

The provision of equipment, barracks, material of all sorts would have been necessary, and also expansion of the cadres of officers and non-commissioned officers to meet not only peace requirements but those of general mobilization. All this would have been costly and not easy, but it could have been done. It would, however, have involved a period of transition ; and in this

period, especially in the first six or seven years of it, our Army would not have been so well trained or so well fitted for serious war as it was under the existing voluntary system. Such a risk could only have been incurred when the chance of war was remote. Ought we to have offered Germany such an opportunity as the transition period would give her, coupling with that opportunity the threat to her of a future British Army large enough in combination to make her defeat certain ? Ought we to have done this, when it was already doubtful at Algeciras in 1906, and again over Agadir in 1911, whether Germany had not already made up her mind to war ? There can be but one answer. We should not have averted war, but have precipitated it.

This is written with special reference to the period from the end of 1905, for that is the period during which the Liberal Government was responsible, and of which I can write with knowledge. But much of what has been said is applicable to the years before 1905. If a British Army on a continental scale were to be built up, the beginning must have been made in the years after 1870, when the prospect of European war was or seemed to be remote. Even so, the thing would have led not to peace, but to war. We should have been doing just what Germany was

doing after she launched her naval programme : we should have been aiming at a large Army as well as a supreme Fleet. Other nations would not have stood that ; we should have brought a European combination into existence against us ; it would have been we, and not Germany, who would have been forcing the pace and inspiring the fear that leads first to armaments and then to war. The facts are that conscription and a great Army, in addition to a supreme Navy, were politically impossible in Britain before the war. Nothing but prophetic insight into the German peril would have made conscription politically possible—an insight not confined to a few minds but one that penetrated the hearts and beliefs of the people. Such insight must have dated back, and become effective in preparation long before 1905, long before the German peril was above the political horizon.¹

It is futile to speculate upon whether the war would have been short and successful if there had been a large British Army ready for it. The war would have anticipated such an event ; it would have come when conscription and a large Army ceased to be politically impossible in Britain ; that is to

¹ The above is founded on a memorandum written by one of our ablest military authorities who was then advising the War Office.

say, at the moment when we began to change our military system.

Here it may be convenient, and not altogether irrelevant, to narrate a personal matter. It was in May 1914 that serious trouble in my eyesight became definitely and certainly known.

During my first years of office, as Secretary of State, I had not attempted to get any exercise in London. The charge upon my time at the Foreign Office and the Cabinet was too exacting to permit the arrangements in advance and the consistent practice twice a week that are necessary to play so serious and severe a game as tennis with satisfaction. From the moment of entering office I had, therefore, ceased to play tennis at all. In the more recent years I had found squash rackets a useful and enjoyable means of getting exercise. A court would be engaged, and a game with a friend arranged at short notice. I had no proficiency, and had known little of the game before ; but it is a game in which indifferent or at any rate only moderate players can get concentrated exercise. If the players are evenly matched, and each does his best, it is easy, in the comparatively short space of an hour, to get the concentrated sensation of having extended lungs and limbs and perspired to heart's content. In this

way it is a very useful game for men in middle life, who have but short or uncertain periods of leisure in the week, and who wish to retain something of the vigour and activity of youth.

In the autumn of 1913 I began to find difficulty in seeing the ball at squash rackets ; it was natural at first to attribute this to the impaired power of focusing, which is not unusual, and is probably in some degree inevitable as we grow older. But the difficulty increased rapidly. A few years before this there had been an indication that all was not well. In December 1910 my brother George had been at home and had gone with me to election meetings. As we drove about the country we had compared our sight on starry winter evenings. I had then found out that I could no longer see the small star, familiarly known as " the Wagoner " in the " Great Bear," or " Charles' Wain," as I suppose the constellation should be called to keep the simile. This failing, too, was put down to some normal or not very abnormal lessening of keenness of vision, perhaps due to the exceptional strain of work and office, and only temporary. But I had remembered that my grandfather, when out with me on winter evenings on the gravel path in front of the house at Fallodon, had in advanced old age been able to see " the Wagoner " and

point it out to me. Even in 1910 this recollection caused me some uneasiness. We are, however, apt to dismiss from our minds unpleasant symptoms of bodily failure, till they become practically important. Anxiety about health may sometimes be premature and pusillanimous, but it may also be true that some people dismiss unpleasant symptoms from their minds because they are reluctant to be anxious—are indeed afraid to face anxiety. Some people who are really quite well off suffer from apprehension that they are becoming poor ; “ workhouse fever ” is one name for this disorder. Others become bankrupt from not having had the courage to look into their affairs when they first began to fear that all was not going well.

Early in 1914 an oculist was consulted : he found the vision abnormally defective, and asked me what I smoked and how much. He, having ascertained that I smoked four times a day, generally one pipe on each occasion, sometimes a cigar instead of a pipe, said that this did not seem enough to cause the trouble, but that there was no doubt the cause was over-smoking, and that if I left it off the sight would be restored in about a month. I left off smoking forthwith for two months ; after that the eyes were examined again. This time serious trouble was discovered, with which smoking had nothing to

do, and the oculist expressed a wish for a consultation. It took place in May. After examining the eyes the two oculists withdrew to consult. When they returned they informed me that they were both absolutely agreed, and they wished first of all to tell me that I should never be quite blind, never have to be led about, should always be able to distinguish light from darkness. Their manner was serious, and it was evident that they were preparing me for bad news. I said, " You mean that I shall lose the power of reading ? " They replied, " That is it." In their opinion there was nothing to be done : they suggested I might go away for six months' rest and country life, but they did not press it as urgent ; it would not be a cure. They said that after such a serious statement from them it would be natural that I might wish for other opinions. In answer to my questions they told me the treatment that a German oculist would probably advise, but said it would in my case be entirely empirical. They did not discourage the project of going to Germany, and named a great German oculist.

At this time—it was in the month of May—the crisis of the Home Rule trouble was coming upon us ; the prospect before the Government was full of difficulty. I felt that without urgent reason I could not leave the

Cabinet at that moment, and the opinion of the oculist was that my case was not urgent, because nothing was hopeful, and the progress of the mischief would be slow. I decided to do nothing till the Session was over, and then to go to Germany to consult the oculist there, who had been recommended. But before the Session ended the war had come upon Europe.

A year later I consulted a third oculist in London. He considered it essential that I should rest the eyes completely for six weeks. I did so, and at the end of that interval he pronounced the trouble quiescent, and I returned to the Foreign Office. Except for that interruption failing sight did not interfere at all with work, till after I left office, for I retained the power of reading with average ease and rapidity till the summer of 1918. Then I ceased to be able to read, and for six months was dependent for all correspondence and news upon being read to aloud. Since then, by the use of peculiar glasses of very high power, I have been able to write and to read slowly and with effort ; but it is impossible for me to distinguish faces at a distance of more than a few inches, to identify birds and flowers, or see the beauty of a landscape or a sunset. On the other hand, it is quite easy for me to walk except on rough ground, as quickly and independently

as other people, and even to ride an ordinary bicycle at moderate pace, and in confidence that whatever meets me will observe the rule of the road. Minute and tiresome examinations have discovered no trace of the diseases with which eye trouble is often associated. The removal of a discreditable tooth in 1919 may have helped to arrest the increase of the trouble, and since 1918 there has been very little change ; but what there has been is not for the better. Hope exists in trying various treatments that do not involve drugs or operations, and can certainly do no harm ; but, so far, the words of one of the oculists have proved true : “ Never believe anyone who tells you that you can be cured—because you cannot be cured ; never believe anyone who tells you that you will go blind—because you won’t.”

CHAPTER XX

SOME QUESTIONS OF STRATEGY

Churchill and the Fleet—Readiness of the Fleet—Decision not to Demobilize—The Expeditionary Force—Two Questions—Appointment of Kitchener as Secretary for War—Advantages and Drawbacks—Kitchener's Intuitions—An Inspirer of Public Confidence—Mistakes in Strategy — Side-shows — The Dardanelles — The Antwerp Expedition—The Help of the Dominions.

WHOEVER has read this detailed account of the period of political discussion and negotiation must have often had present to his mind the question, What, during these critical but doubtful days, was being done to prepare for the event of war? The answer is that everything, naval and military, that could be done in this critical week was being done.

On Saturday, July 25, Churchill came to me and said that the naval manœuvres, which that year were a trial mobilization, were just over. They were an annual event, and had been arranged and carried out without reference to any prospect of imminent war. At the moment when he was speaking to me the British Navy was on a war footing, was in fact mobilized. On Monday, in the ordinary course, the leave that was usual after manœuvres would begin, and the Navy would

go to the opposite extreme of being demobilized. He said that to him the diplomatic situation seemed so ominous that he thought it would be well not to demobilize the Fleet, but to keep it mobilized.

He wanted to know, if I confirmed his view of the diplomatic situation. The answer, of course, was to confirm it, and to say that, from the Foreign Office point of view, the action Churchill intended to take was entirely justified. He acted accordingly. From that moment the Navy remained ready. It was an accident that the end of the naval manœuvres coincided with the diplomatic stage of a foreign crisis ; the fact that full advantage was taken of this good fortune was due to the vigour and alertness of Churchill. What went on inside the Admiralty is not known to me, and I can only write of what came under my own observation, and this was the activity of the First Lord, from the moment he took up his office. Full measure of credit must be reserved for naval officers and the Board of Admiralty, but undoubtedly the country owes much also to Churchill for the great advantage that war found us with a strong Fleet in an exceptionally good state of preparation.

It is not my province, nor is it within my knowledge, to say what went on inside the War Office. What is certain and known is

that, when the moment came to send the Expeditionary Force abroad, it was there, ready and equipped; and the transport arrangements were ready too, for the four divisions sent abroad went to France, not only in the time estimated as required for this operation, but in less than the time.

For the first time perhaps in our history war found us with all the forces, naval and military, that we were believed or supposed to have, actually there, ready and mobile. Every critic, who wishes to be fair, should first gauge this fact. In the sense of having ready, what the Government said we had, what Parliament had been asked to vote, and what the country had a right to expect that we had, we were better prepared for war than we had ever been. Whether we ought, or could have had something else, something that we had not aspired to and that Parliament had not been asked to vote, is another matter, and has been considered in a former chapter.

The use to be made of the Expeditionary Force was the first doubtful point to be decided, and on this two separate questions presented themselves.

1. Was it safe to send the whole force abroad at once and leave Britain without any military force available for action, pending mobilization of the Territorial Army? On

this point there was room for discussion, and there was naturally some difference of opinion. The landing of even a small German force, after the Expeditionary Force had gone, and before the Territorial Army was ready, might do irreparable damage. Under modern conditions, things might be possible that in the Napoleonic Wars had been impossible to the enemy. A great War Council was held ; of course soldiers like Sir John French and Sir Douglas Haig, who were to take an active part in the execution of military operations, were present, but not these alone. Lord Roberts also attended it. As far as I remember, the military authorities were not greatly troubled about home defence ; it was felt that the Navy, strong and ready as in war, would be able to prevent any hostile landing that would be serious. Without much difficulty a decision was reached to send to France four divisions of the Expeditionary Force immediately ; the other two divisions were to follow with no long delay. This satisfied military opinion, and represented the general sense of civilian opinion. Haldane alone among civilians was, from the first, for giving authority at once to send all six divisions to France in the shortest possible time.¹

¹ It was stated that Haldane put difficulty in the way of the despatch of the Expeditionary Force. This is quite untrue. The report arose probably from his giving an

2. There was also a second point of doubt, which, though settled in the decision just recorded, required separate consideration. This was not concerned at all with the provision for home defence. It related solely to the moment at which the British Force could be used best and most effectively to help the French Army. It was entirely a military point, and the civilians left the discussion of it to the soldiers, who were not quite unanimous about it. It was suggested that the British Expeditionary Force should be kept in reserve till the first shock of the German onset was over. Then there would be a critical moment at which the despatch of the British Force would be not only effective but decisive; when it would really be the knock-out blow. The plan suggested to my lay mind a comparison with the battle of Waterloo; the French Army would in this instance have played the part of the British at Waterloo, and the British Force would have turned the scale decisively, as the Prussians did in 1815.

This plan was based on the assumption that the French Army, even if unable to repel, would be able to withstand the first shock of

order inside the War Office that the Force was not to go without the authority of the Government: a proper and necessary restriction which, if disobeyed, would have meant chaos.

the German attack. This may seem a strange miscalculation in the light of what actually happened ; but it must be remembered that both British and French military opinion of the highest order hitherto held that the French Army and the British Expeditionary Force would together be able to resist successfully a German attack, even if France and Britain were alone and unsupported by Russia. I had in my own mind discounted some of this opinion. British and French military authorities knew very well that no more than the six divisions of the British Expeditionary Force were or could be available at the outbreak of war. Military authorities, generally speaking, were anxious that the whole force should be sent ; they were, therefore, predisposed to persuade themselves and us that this force would be sufficient and effective ; for this was an encouragement to send it. To say that it would not be enough was to suggest that it would be sacrificed to no purpose in failure. Military authority, therefore, was naturally predisposed to the belief that the Expeditionary Force would make the whole difference and would ensure success ; and this at the time was a genuine and sincere opinion. But it was not inconsistent with this view—it was an inference from it—that the French Army alone would be able, for a time, to withstand the German attack.

For now it was not a case of Britain and France alone ; Russia was to be taken into account as an Ally, and the Germans, while assaulting France, must be preparing to resist a Russian attack.

I trust it has been made clear that this plan was not put forward with any idea of sparing the British Force, of sheltering it from exposure ; it was, in fact, inspired by nothing but consideration for the most effective use of the British Army in the common cause of victory. The prevailing opinion, however, was that the British Force should be sent at once ; the chances of modern war were too unknown, and the risks of an initial German success or of an irretrievable defeat of the French Army were too great to allow of any nice calculation. The wisest course was to minimize the risk by sending the British Force at once to take its place in the front line.

When the Council broke up I found myself next to French in the passage on the way out. What the actual words were that passed between us I cannot recall, but I said something about his feeling it a great moment. The impression his reply made is vivid still. It was that of a man strung to the highest pitch of hope and spirit in the face of a great enterprise for which his whole life had been an anticipation.

Those, if any there be, who think that such feeling in a soldier shows want of sympathy for his fellow-men, had better read Uncle Toby's reply to a similar reproach by Mr. Shandy.¹

It was necessary to appoint a new Secretary of State for War. Seely had resigned after the Curragh trouble in Ireland a few weeks before. Asquith had himself then taken the War Office temporarily to avoid making a new appointment, till the internal trouble was over. In this he had been justified; his own personal qualities, and his position as Prime Minister, were especially suitable for calming those troubles. But now, with the advent of war, a new appointment was necessary. Asquith's first thought was naturally to send Haldane back to the War Office. The soldiers had made the Expeditionary Force the fine thing it was, but the creation of the General Staff and the whole organization of the Army was due to Haldane, and he had the confidence of soldiers like French and Haig, who were to have the chief commands in the field. From that point of view it was not only an obvious, but an ideal appointment. Haldane, however, had attracted much political animus. It was suggested that his known interest in German

¹ See chapter xxxii in *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, by Laurence Sterne.

philosophy must make him pro-German ; his work at the War Office, though well known to and admired by his colleagues and by the soldiers who had worked with, or under him, was not in the knowledge of, or at any rate not present to, the public mind. Kitchener, a popular hero, was in England, taking his leave from Egypt. An outcry arose, inspired partly by distrust of Haldane and made violent by desire to see Kitchener at the War Office. It was decided that he, and not Haldane, should be the Secretary of State for War. As will be shown directly, this decision was on the whole the better one ; indeed, it was in the circumstances inevitable. But the public little knew the disadvantages that had to be set against the advantage of it. Kitchener knew nothing about the organization of the War Office, or of the Army at home ; his knowledge of the personal value of the younger men was necessarily less than that of soldiers who had held home commands. He knew nothing of the Territorial Army, and grievously underestimated its value. " A Town Clerk's Army," was his estimate of it. In all this there was great disadvantage and much loss.

On the other hand, Kitchener foresaw, to an extent that no one else did at first, the need for raising a great Army, larger than anything that had yet been contemplated.

He based this demand for men on the opinion that the war would last for three years. That seemed to most of us unlikely, if not incredible. We thought only of a war of movement, that would bring a military decision one way or the other in less than three years; it also seemed to many of us that the terrific output of men and treasure that modern conditions made possible would bring exhaustion to every belligerent in much less than three years. Kitchener had more foresight than most of us in this matter, and announced to the Cabinet that he proposed at once to raise a million men. As we walked away from the Cabinet a colleague asked me what I thought of this proposal. I replied that I believed the war would be over before a million new men could be trained and equipped, but that, if this expectation were wrong, the million men should of course be sent abroad to take part in the war. It was therefore clear that we should all agree to what Kitchener wanted. Kitchener's foresight was amply justified by events, but it was never disclosed how or by what process of reasoning he made this forecast of the length of the war. It was the deadlock of trench warfare that made the forecast come true, and indeed more than true, for the war lasted over four years.

The natural inference is that Kitchener

foresaw trench warfare. This, however, he did not foresee. When the opposing armies had dug themselves in from Switzerland to the sea, no one was more perplexed than Kitchener. "I don't know what is to be done," he said to me more than once; "this isn't *war*." He must have reached his conclusion about the duration of the war by some flash of instinct, rather than by reasoning. If it were so, it did not make the conclusion less valuable to the country, and it made it more and not less individual to himself. He proceeded to appeal for the men by voluntary enlistment. "I don't want conscription yet. When I do want it, I will ask for it." That was his formula in the Government for the earlier part of the war. And he got the men. That is the great justification of his appointment. Conscription in the early days of the war was impossible; public opinion was not ready for it; it would have been resisted. Voluntary enlistment gave the country a good start in good-will and enthusiasm; conscription would have given a bad start. There would have been division of opinion, much resentment; the country might even have foundered in political difficulties. Kitchener brought to his Government a great asset of public confidence. Men believed that what he wanted was really necessary, and they responded; they trusted

him, and came forward to serve under him. In war, if something clearly wrong or unwise is demanded, it is necessary to the utmost to resist public clamour ; but it is also necessary to do what will inspire public confidence. The appointment of Kitchener had serious disadvantages and drawbacks, but it had also great advantages. He under-rated the value of the Territorial Army, and of an able General Staff at the War Office ; but he set to work from the first to build up a really great Army, and he put heart into the country.

This narrative will contain little about military or naval operations. The history of these can be, has already been, and will still further be, much better told by others than by me. I do not remember that I initiated anything naval or military. It is a commonplace of history that amateur strategists are dangerous in time of war. I had no qualities that inclined me to become one, and if I had had, I hope I should have resisted the inclination. But the position of a civilian in a War Council, who feels that, from lack of military knowledge and training, this limitation is imposed upon him, is not glorious. He knows that credit is not due to him for successful strategy, and yet he must feel some responsibility for mistakes in which he has acquiesced.

The part of a civilian Government is to see

that the highest professional posts in the Admiralty and the War Office, and the chief commands in the Army and Navy, are filled by soldiers and sailors best qualified for them; and that these are supported in the use of the armed forces. At the outbreak of the war there was no question about this. The military and naval officers of most known competence were in the highest posts or were appointed to the chief commands. The disposition of the Fleet and the use of the Expeditionary Force were in accord with the plans carefully prepared by the best naval and military authority, and for this the British Government was in August 1914 open to no reproach and is entitled to credit. As war proceeds new plans have to be made and new military and naval decisions taken to meet new developments. For these the Government cannot divest itself of responsibility, and its proper course is to ascertain what is the best naval and military opinion. In this we got presently on to debatable and difficult ground in military matters. We could always get Kitchener's opinion, but we did not insist on having before us the ascertained consensus of military opinion, as we should have done, if there had been a civilian instead of a Field-Marshal as Secretary of State for War. There was a natural tendency to yield to Kitchener's opinion as that of a soldier; on the other

hand, there was a disposition in critical moments to attach less weight to it than we should have done, if it had been presented to us as that of an able General Staff or of those in high commands. We might assume that his view was that of a General Staff, and represented a consensus of military opinion ; but we did not know what this was as certainly as we must have known it if there had been a civilian at the head of the War Office. The ideal Minister for War is one who knows and observes his own limitations, who sets himself with ability to discern to organize the best military opinion, to focus and support it, and who by experience and training knows how to manage a Cabinet. Had such a Minister been appointed in 1914 some of the mistakes made in the earlier stages of the war would have been avoided. This reflection is made with consideration for the future, but let something else also be remembered in this and all other reflections on the conduct of the war. We can see in the light of after-events the mistakes that actually were made ; we do not know the mistakes that might or would have been made by the Cabinet, had someone other than Kitchener been at the War Office.

The chief mistakes in strategy may, in my opinion, be summarized in two words : “ Side-shows.” In justice to Kitchener it must be

recorded that he disliked them all, and my own particular regret is that I did not resolutely support every resistance he made to them. But all of them could not be avoided. The defence of Egypt and the Suez Canal, for instance, was essential, and in justice not only to Kitchener but to the Cabinet it must be stated that sometimes concessions in strategy that we thought undesirable *had* to be made to Allies; though sometimes it was they who reluctantly yielded to our initiative. Due weight should be given to this qualification; but even so, it seems to me to be true criticism that we did not sufficiently concentrate attention on the one cardinal point: that it was the German Army which had to be beaten, and that this could be done only on the Western front. For us to attempt it anywhere else was to give the Germans the advantage of interior and safe lines of communication compared with our own. Had this been grasped continuously as the central fact of the war, the side-shows—Gallipoli, Bagdad, Salonika—would either never have been undertaken or would have been kept within smaller dimensions.

It may be urged that, but for such diversions as these, the Germans would have brought Turks or Bulgarians to fight on the Western front. It is doubtful if the Germans could have done this. The Turks and Bul-

garians had other objectives of their own, such as Egypt and Macedonia, and if Bulgaria had conquered Macedonia it was by no means certain that the Bulgarian Army would have done more than occupy what it had conquered. Even if it be granted that there was risk of Germany getting help in this way, it remains true that the side-shows, with their long line of sea communication on which every transport, every supply had to run the gauntlet of submarines, entailed an enormous strain and wastage that more than counter-balanced the advantage to be gained from them. Even if the Turks and Bulgarians had to be fought somewhere, surely we could have fought them to best advantage on ground where our own line of communication was shortest and most secure—that is to say, on the Western front. Instead of this, we sent forces that might have been kept for the West to meet Turks and Bulgarians at points where we had the disadvantage in lines of communication.

Various suggestions are made as to how the war could have been finished in shorter time. The suggestion that the war might have been won sooner if the strength spent on side-shows had been concentrated directly on the German Army at the Western front is at least worth considering. The moral for civilians in the future is to ascertain what the best and most

responsible military opinion holds to be the central and cardinal point of the war, and, having ascertained it, to keep within the narrowest bounds everything that will divert strength from that point.

The highest military authority cannot be divided. The Government must choose someone to command. If they cease to trust him, they must change him; if military opinion be incompetent and wrong, no Government can save the country from defeat. The only hope, and that not an impossible one, is that the enemy Government or military authorities may be still more incompetent. In this war I believe the best and preponderating military opinion would have been as I have stated it; and, had it been so concentrated as to impress itself on the Cabinet, it would have been irresistible; for I think Kitchener's own views were such as would have been confirmed by it, and his authority with the Cabinet would then have been reinforced and more strenuously exerted. As it was, various suggestions as to military operations in different parts of the world were discussed too much as isolated questions, when the primary consideration ought to have been their conformity with or departure from a central scheme of military strategy. This criticism applies to Allied Governments as well as to our own.

After a year's experience of war the Cabinet

began to insist upon having a real General Staff at the War Office. Kitchener yielded to Cabinet pressure and to the growing public anxiety about the conduct of the war. Finally towards the end of 1915 Sir William Robertson was appointed with a definite position as Chief of the General Staff. Thenceforward we had co-ordinated military opinion before us on matters of strategy. Kitchener loyally accepted the decision. In reality it greatly strengthened his hands, and there was no reason to suppose that his opinion differed from that of the General Staff. But he still seemed not to feel the necessity of having both a Secretary of State for War and a Chief of the Staff at the War Office. It was as if he could not see that there was room and scope for both. He gave the impression of feeling almost superseded. A few months later it was thought that his personality and authority would be invaluable in a visit to Russia, to encourage the Tsar and the Russian authorities and to co-ordinate Allied strategy there. He undertook this difficult task willingly, as if he felt that it would give him new scope and that he would be of more use there than at home. The visit might have proved of inestimable value to Russia and to the Allies: the disaster to the *Hampshire*, in which Kitchener started for Russia, was one of the serious tragedies of the war.

With two operations only will I deal separately, and that merely to supplement what has been or may still be written of them by others.

I. THE DARDANELLES

My recollection is very clear that the attack on the Dardanelles was agreed to on the express condition that it should be a naval operation only; it was under no circumstances to involve the use of troops. The British and French armies were at death's grip with the Germans on the Western front, the situation there was still critical for the Allies, and it was important that there should be no diversion of force to other parts of the world, except under pressure of absolute necessity.

If the attack on the Dardanelles did not succeed, it was to be treated as a naval demonstration and abandoned. It was on this condition only that Kitchener agreed to it.

The first attack appeared to have a great success, and the importance of the operation was at once boomed in a way that made it impossible to treat it thereafter as nothing more than a naval demonstration. Had there been the ultimate success, which the first success seemed to assure, no embarrassment would have followed; but there came a check and loss of ships in the subsequent

operations, and it was reluctantly decided that the forts could not be taken without the use of troops. We stood publicly committed to the attack on the Dardanelles, as a serious effort from which we could not withdraw, except by admission of a serious defeat. Kitchener was asked to provide troops for land operations in Gallipoli to support the fleet. This was the very thing that he had expressly stipulated that he should not be called upon to do¹; but, in face of what had happened, he could not now refuse. His subsequent part in the Gallipoli campaign has been criticized. With that I do not feel competent to deal; but, in fairness to his memory, it should be remembered that, in being committed to land operations at all in connexion with the Dardanelles, he was the victim of circumstances that were beyond his control and against which he had endeavoured to guard. When at length the decision to abandon Gallipoli had to be taken, Kitchener was the most tragic figure of us all. He, like the rest of us, anticipated that the withdrawal of the troops could not be accomplished without catastrophe. The first part would get safely away, but the last

¹ It is said that the operation on the Dardanelles should have been planned from the first as a joint military and naval operation. It will be apparent, from what has been said here, that if this had been proposed the operation would never have been agreed to.

detachments would not. "Distress" would not be the right word to apply to Kitchener in these dark days at the end. Distress suggests a breakdown, and this was never true of him. But he felt his responsibility to the Army, and he suffered intensely. Happily all the troops got away safely.

The brunt of the criticism fell at the time on Churchill, who was naturally assumed to be the author of the whole affair, though all of us who consented to it originally shared the responsibility. We were told afterwards that the condition in the Turkish forts was such that if the attack by the ships had been pressed even for one day more, at the outset, it would have succeeded as an entirely naval operation. The real defence of it is that it very nearly did succeed as planned.

There were diplomatic objections to the attempt to force the Dardanelles. These will be dealt with when the narrative passes to the diplomatic side of events. It will be enough to say here that I must take the responsibility for not having urged them beforehand as a reason for not undertaking the affair at all.

2. ANTWERP

It has seemed right, in fairness to Kitchener, to give my recollection of the origin and beginning of the Dardanelles operations. The

same will now be done respecting Churchill's expedition to Antwerp, because this should be given in fairness to him. It is also one of those incidents that stand out in my mind with dramatic clearness, and which for that reason are worth recounting in detail.

I was still in Haldane's house in Queen Anne's Gate, my own household being at Fallodon, whither I had of course been unable to follow it. It was now midnight on October 2, and I was just going to bed, when a message was brought to me that the Private Secretary at the Foreign Office wanted to speak to me on the telephone. I went to it and there heard that a telegram from Belgium was being deciphered, saying that the Belgians had decided to abandon Antwerp immediately. The news was quite unexpected, and was a great blow. I replied that I would go to the Foreign Office at once, and in a few minutes I was there. Churchill had already left the Admiralty *en route* for Dunkirk on some naval business; but he had only just started, and it was arranged that he should be intercepted with the news. The deciphering of the telegram was completed. I read it, put it in my pocket, and went at once to Kitchener (who was then living in Carlton House Gardens), leaving word that Churchill was to be told where I had gone.

Kitchener had gone to bed; there had not

been time yet for his copy of the telegram to get to him. Presently he came down in a dressing-gown, and I gave him the telegram. It was as much a surprise and shock to him as it had been to me. We agreed to wait for Churchill, and I do not remember that much passed between us in the interval. In no very long time Churchill entered with Prince Louis of Battenberg, then First Sea Lord. Churchill's mind was already made up. Immediately he entered the room he said the abandonment of Antwerp must be stopped, and announced that he was going there at once to stop it.

I said something cautious, deprecating the enterprise, not because it seemed foolhardy or undesirable in itself. On the contrary, anything that would avert the fall of Antwerp was worth much risk; and if, as seemed possible, the proposed abandonment of so important a place was due to panic, the energy, resource, and courage of Churchill might save the situation. But the risk of having the First Lord of the Admiralty shut up in Antwerp was startling. Kitchener reserved his opinion, while Churchill developed his plan. Shortly stated, it was this. The Germans were not attacking Antwerp in force. One big gun was the sole trouble. This was knocking out, one after the other, forts that had been deemed, and that were

before any such gun had been invented, impregnable. The German Field Force supporting this gun was not strong ; the assumption was that the Germans could not easily or quickly strengthen it ; if two allied divisions could be spared, the German force could be driven off and Antwerp would be saved. What was essential, therefore, was to delay the abandonment of Antwerp. This Churchill felt sure he could do by his presence there, if there was the prospect of relief by two Allied divisions ; it was a matter only of a very few days. Such was the situation and its prospects, as it presented itself to us at that midnight consultation.

Churchill and Kitchener proceeded to discuss the possibility of using two Allied divisions for this purpose. The British 7th Division was not yet in the battle-line ; there was time to divert it to Antwerp. Kitchener could answer for that. He could not be sure whether the French would or could send a French division to join ours. He thought it not impossible that this could be done ; he was ready to ask the French to do it ; the risk of their not being able to do so was serious, but it had to be taken, for Churchill's departure could not wait till enquiry had been made of the French and an answer received from them ; if he went at all he must go at once.

Finally Kitchener gave an opinion in favour of his going, and then I acquiesced. The First Sea Lord would, of course, remain to deal with whatever might arise at the Admiralty. Churchill started off again, but this time not for Dunkirk, but for Antwerp. The sequel is well known, and can be better described by others. Churchill did delay the fall of Antwerp, but a French division could not be spared, and Antwerp was occupied by the Germans.

The action has been much criticized. I am not competent to pass a military judgment upon it, but, as I acquiesced in it and was one of the four persons present, it is right that I should give my independent recollection of the circumstances in which the decision for Churchill to go to Antwerp was taken. It was indeed his own idea and initiative, but it was part of a concerted plan, and not the mere madcap exploit of a passion for adventure, which it was for some time afterwards assumed to be.

Little has been said about the Dominions, because communication with them was not carried on through the Foreign Office. The part they took in the war, the numbers that they sent, the sacrifices that they made, are on record. The material value of their help is universally recognized ; their deeds, notably in Gallipoli, are famous. What cannot be

illustrated by figures, or measured by narratives of military exploits, is the immense moral value of their support. Promptly, spontaneously, without consultation or persuasion, they gave their help. The effect on the fighting line, it was known, could not be immediate ; the contingents from the Dominions must take some time to arrive, to be organized, to be trained ; but the moral effect was instantaneous. The shock of being suddenly at war had disclosed no faltering or faintness of heart in Britain itself. On the contrary, it evoked an independent and vigorous moral. This is true. But the news from the Dominions carried it still higher. Those who have watched the sea under the impulse of a great wave, urged to a mark farther than the tide has yet reached, know how another wave, following while the first is still flowing, carries the flood forward beyond the limit of anticipation. They know how essential it is to this result that the second wave should rise and follow quickly upon the first. This simile may serve to illustrate something of the effect upon us at home of the prompt support of the Dominions. It is not easy to express in words influences such as this, that are intangible, though potent and pervading. One recollection may serve as an example. Shortly after the outbreak of war I met Albert Grey

—the late Earl Grey—in St. James's Park. We walked on together. I found him in the highest spirits. It was not because he liked war: he was a man who desired and loved human happiness, and hated all that clouded it. It was not because nice calculations of strength or blind confidence made him feel sure of victory. He spoke not at all of war or of the chances of war, but solely of the splendid spirit of the British Commonwealth of Nations. By this he was uplifted, so that he said he rejoiced in having lived to see this day. It was the vision of the people of Britain and of the Dominions combined in one high resolve and effort that inspired him and raised his own spirits to a height of enthusiasm and confidence.

This chapter on the war has been concerned with military matters only. It contains some observations that may be of use to civilians, who in future may find themselves members of a war council, and a few points on which it seemed desirable to supplement what has been or can be written by others. What follows now will be concerned with the diplomatic side of the war, in which the Secretary for Foreign Affairs had necessarily special knowledge and responsibility.

